

SANDY MARRIED

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE STRAYINGS OF SANDY

THREE GIRLS AND A HERMIT

TWO IMPOSTORS AND TINKER

THE CONVERSION OF CONCREGAN

AUNT JANE AND UNCLE JAMES

LADY ELVERTON'S EMERALDS

SOME HAPPENINGS OF GLENDALYNE

THE BOY, SOME HORSES, AND A GIRL

SALLY

SANDY MARRIED

BY

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CHAPTER I

Ha! Oh! my life! If I were young again.

—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

REGINALD HANNYSIDE looked critically at the hand-rail of the rustic bridge he was walking across, and directed that it should be renewed at once.

"With oak," he said. "See to it, Wilson. Send to Northlap for proper stuff. It was disgraceful ever to have put on this wretched wood."

Sandy Acland looked at the woods all round with a surprised air. The bough tops were green with promise of summer; twigs and stout branches and sturdy trunks made tangling maze all round.

"Send to Northlap," said Sandy. "Haven't you got a hatchet, Wilson? There's enough wood here for a hundred rails, Reggie."

Hannyside pursed his lips. "Alex.," he said sharply, "green stuff which might last five years."

"Well, there'll be heaps more in five years, won't there?" said Sandy equably.

The big park stretched round them, tidy even in its vastness. Young trees grew inside their iron guards; the palings shone new-painted, white, and smooth. A herd of delicately coloured Jersey cows cropped the rich grass, graceful, black-muzzled things, each one with a recorded pedigree.

Half a mile away a big house stood out, clear cut in the spring sunlight. A great pile of mellow brick, smoke pouring from a dozen chimneys; a place which seemed to speak arrogantly of wealth.

"Search me for peeling walls, for a speck of disrepair," it might have said. "My owner must treat me as I expect to be treated. If one of my slates is loosened, half a dozen tradesmen must come to repair it; when my face wants its annual painting, the bill for it represents a clerk's yearly income."

The trim opulence of England was all round. The woods were no wild straggle of undergrowth; laurels were pinned down and trimmed; paths and rides were cleared and tidy.

"Heaps more," said Sandy again. "Waste of money buying oak for one's grandchildren to put their hands on, eh?"

Mr. Hannyside looked thoughtfully at his guest.

"Go to Northlap this afternoon, Wilson," he said drily, "and order the rails."

"Better buy a hatchet," said Sandy absently, as he peered down into the stream.

"You have changed, Alex.," said Hannyside slowly.

Sandy hoped that he had. The river glided between its flat banks, in shades of translucent grey and green; here and there little crinkles broke it, or silver flash of shallow. Long wisps of weed hung out, green and plummy; there were a few brown deeps, where big trout might lurk.

Sandy's hands were across his eyes. Peering into the slowly moving water, he caught sight of a trout lurking between weed and rock, a fish of two pounds or more.

"There!" said Sandy, "good fish! Full of 'em, I suppose," he looked up at the hatchery. "Full of 'em," he said. "If Mikelo was here," he added, "he'd get that fellow by tickling him. Or," Sandy leant over further, "he'd do a lot with a cross-line, when no one was looking."

"A cross-line," Hannyside groaned; and the head made respectful echo: "A cross-line. Here, on the Litchen! Do you *poach* in Ireland, Alexander?"

"Do you think you'd get an Irish country fellow to take

a fish out on a line and a fly if he could do it otherwise?" grinned Sandy, pleasantly. "If one winks at it, they don't do it aggressively, that's all. Brr!" he threw a stone at the trout. "England's terrible tidy—even the rivers are trimmed up."

Mr. Wilson, bailiff and steward, might have been heard to murmur from the depths of a crimson face, that "'E 'ad marked down that there trout for Mr. Hildebrand, and now he would move on."

"You *have* changed, Alexander," said Hannyside. "Sadly."

"Lord, no!—gaily!" said Sandy placidly.

They walked through the shade of a beech wood, silver stems and lace of tender green, for the spring was just bidding good day to summer. Rides were cut, wide and even; the undergrowth was trimmed and trained. Even the anemones, carpeting the ground with white and blue, looked as if they had been planted; the wood ended on a stretch of grass close to white railings, running round the tall red brick house. Inside them rhododendrons flared, and azaleas blinked, and a wealth of spring flowers blazed under hot April sunshine.

"Changed, have I?" Sandy looked up quietly at his friend's grey face. If he had changed, he was not marked by a fatal illness; he was not old and white and bent.

Ten years, the stride from middle fifties to middle sixties, is a large one. He had left Hannyside well-preserved; a little careful as to his choice of hair dyes; but well set up, active, healthy. He met him again, and saw him an old man, close on seventy, with the same grim humour twinkling in his eyes and round his firmly cut mouth. "A little odd," people whispered now of Mr. Reginald Hannyside.

"Fine place, ain't it, Alexander? And—I don't know who to leave it to. That is why I sent for you. Hey there!" he swung the gate back sharply, "this gate is in a piteous state. I have not been down this way for two

months. Only just back from abroad. Hey there Wilson !”

“They can give it a lick over in ten minutes,” observed Sandy. “Give me a pot and a brush, if you like, I’ll do it now.”

“Without, I presume, scraping or burning off the old paint,” said Hannyside calmly. “May I ask what your place is like, Alexander ?”

Sandy’s face grew bright. “The best in the world,” he said. “And everything gets done in time, too. Of course, there were twenty or thirty years to run after ; we’ve only caught bits of them ; but if you saw it, Reggie—and the old gardens, and the stables—they’re all new. And the horses—and Nora.”

Northlap Priory boasted a veranda over its terrace. It was warm and sheltered there. Hannyside directed that tea should be brought out. He sat down heavily on a long cane chair, looking out at the trim Park. It was plain to see that he hated leaving his home. Then, recollecting hospitality, he offered Sandy a cocktail.

“Bless you—no thanks !” said Sandy. “Sauces and liqueurs nearly did for me once. I live on whisky now.”

Mr. Hannyside looked apologetically at his butler, who, with the assistance of two footmen, was solemnly endeavouring to lay a tea-table.

“Not altogether, y’ know,” said Sandy, catching the look. “Though they tell me it preserves life.”

Marston, having placed a chased silver tea set on a laced cloth, and arranged a seed cake and some bread-and-butter beside them, observed coldly that tea was served.

Sandy took some black and chilly tea without enthusiasm ; with a sad look in his eyes he watched his host sipping hot bovril.

“Alexander,” said Hannyside, “are you completely buried alive in that hopeless country ?”

“I’m completely happy there,” said Sandy. “And we

come to London twice a year. I come to wonder how I ever lived in town, and went to my office, and toddled to my club, and played Bridge vilely, and called it life."

"But—do you mean to say you are content to stagnate," barked Hannyside, "not to try to make more money—to get on?"

"Even a gold coffin can't cheer a fellow up when he's in it," observed Sandy equably. "I had made enough; bless you! I'm a millionaire at Castleknock. Alexander the Great will waste my substance serving the king; and Nora already thinks of a stray Duke for Kathleen, my daughter. If you'd given up the arena ten years before you did, Reggie," he paused.

The old man's face grew suddenly very old. Years of toil; a few years of rest with a large fortune, but with broken health; with a fell disease which could not be cured. He had Northlap Priory; he had his stud of racers; but he had got them all too late. He sighed bitterly, peevishly; and took up the evening paper.

"Gold Dreams are going up," he said. "I'll sell mine at fours; but I am nervous about Mammons—very nervous. I'll 'phone to Naughton in the morning."

Sandy yawned, and wondered if he might have more bread-and-butter; he had cleared the plate of wafers.

"If I could have a little more," he said pleasantly to Marston, who had arrived with cigarettes. "Of course, if the butter's out, or anything, the cake will do."

The outraged face of Mr. Marston was as ice and thunder adroitly blended. He sought for words to crush this red-headed guest who spoke of necessary things being "out" in households which he, Marston, accepted service in; and could think of no revenge save that of directing an underling to cut three plates full of brown and white and home-made bread, and to cut them slowly.

"Want anything?" said Hannyside, turning. "Oh, bread-and-butter. They ought to have brought toast or muffins. Toast, Marston,"

"H'm! Tell Mrs. Peters toast is required also," directed the offended butler, and then in a whisper, "Nothing but potatoes, I hunderstands, at the other side of the Channel—bread a change."

"At six," said Hannyside, "we'll go to the stables. There is Red Fancy to see. And Delight; and either of them might win a National. I've tried for twenty years," he said excitedly. "The Northlap stable must do it still. Must, I say! The blue-and-silver hoop must come first at Aintree. I've never had luck with the horses, Alexander, never! Bed Post fell when he must have won. Ben Nevis broke down the day before the race; and Cromartie began to cough just when he'd done a good preparation."

Reginald Hannyside's face worked feverishly. His seat upon his hobby horse was now secure. He had tried to win a National for twenty years, and never seen his colours in front.

"But that," he said, "is not what I brought you from Ireland to talk of, Alexander. I am not sure what to do with the place and the horses."

Sandy gave up hopes of bread-and-butter, and fell to smoking.

"Who's your nearest and least unpleasant relation?" he said shortly.

Mr. Hannyside chuckled grimly. "There are two," he said. "Both near—equally unpleasant. Hildebrand, son of my only sister; Araminta, daughter of my only brother. Araminta—Hildebrand——" Hannyside grew exhausted, and took a lozenge from his pocket.

"Marry 'em," suggested Sandy, petting an engaging Clumber spaniel.

Reginald Hannyside grunted hopelessly. "My sister Maud," he said, "married a Bethel angel, or something of that ilk. Hildebrand won't go to ordinary church; he does something with forks and bursts of original oratory. An organ is an appeal to Satan. He can't do with our prayers. Araminta——"

"Ara—minta—A—r—a——," said Sandy to Bob, the Clumber. "Funny name, Bobbie."

"Araminta is a person with a mission in life. My family are not happy in their selections. My brother's wife looked on widowhood as a kind of holiday, and took to politics and religion to console her."

"But if both are religious," said Sandy briskly, "then certainly marry 'em."

"Marry 'em." Hannyside stamped his foot. "They'd have to be married in a graveyard. If Hildebrand is a Plymouth angel—I may have got it wrong; Ara-minta——"

"Ar—a—mint—a," crooned Sandy softly.

"Yes, Araminta is nearly a Catholic. Can you marry a person who thinks a church too ornamental to pray in, and a lady who goes to confession, and wears a cross, and fasts in Lent? But I'll settle 'em, perhaps I'll settle 'em." He chuckled cunningly. "I've made my will, Alex., though I have sent for you. I've made it, and I'm hanged if I know where it is."

"Make another," said Sandy absently.

Mr. Hannyside shook his white head. It appeared he could never again compass so many legal complications in any will, and he liked complications. "I made it," he said vaguely, "but fact is, I've got no head, my boy. I had it with me in France. You know I've rented a villa near Paris for a few years; and I had it in Scotland—and I must just write round and get it found."

"Bread-and-butter, sir. Toast, sir," said Marston, with impressive superiority, laying down three plates and a muffin dish.

Sandy thanked him graciously.

"Forgotten tea now," he said cheerily. "Butter came all right since, I suppose. Here, Bob!"

Mr. Marston breathed through his nose, as he remarked that in this establishment butter was never lacking.

"But locked up, p'r'aps," said Sandy, sympathetically

"Cook out. Sorry to have asked for it. Here, Bob, old boy."

Marston stood in Jove-like majesty as the footmen cleared the table. He was offended. He did not know where this guest could have come from.

Mr. Hannyside got up. He looked enviously at Sandy's easy jump from his low chair. He muttered something about fellows keeping young like that for a certain time.

"It's young Blackbird," said Sandy, "Blackbird's daughter. One has to be active with her. It's that and the west winds and the hammers and nails." There's no oak for coffins in Ireland. We have to keep young, he was going to say, but bit back the foolish jest.

The stables were half a mile away. They drove there in a luxurious motor, over an avenue through the Park. The training ground, with its stiff, bushed-up fences, was farther on. They were big and grim as the obstacles at Aintree, and it took a good horse to get over them.

The failures and the future hopes were just getting their last feed. With a memory of Crimson Rambler, now deceased, tingling through him, Sandy Acland looked at the range of sumptuous boxes; at the golden piles of wheaten straw under the horses; the silvery hay which was being carefully carried in for them to eat.

There was no "Get over, Brownie—over with ye, ye schemer," as Patsy flung bundles down through the square holes between stable and loft.

"Blinded that Crow does want to be," Patsy would grumble, "with his eye sot above on what's fallin' to him."

Watson, the head man, observed the mysterious dignity necessary to his class. He listened with the condescension of a grown man to a child, as his master praised and criticized and questioned.

Mr. Watson would, of course, strip Red Fancy, if his master wished it.

"But a nervous 'oss, sir, an' not fed yet, sir." Watson

chinked silver in his pockets softly. "Still, as you wish, sir, of course."

"Remind you of the Downs, sir," said a voice behind Sandy; "of Ramblers and otherwise, sir."

Acland turned to see Phillips, imperturbably valet-like; unchanged by the passage of ten years, and grave as if he had never whipped a mule across the hills, or ridden Holy Robin in the wall country near Athgarvon.

"Phillips!" said Mr. Acland reprovingly.

"Walked down to see the horses, sir. All jumping horses, so was doubly interested, sir."

"Your man," said Hannyside, "is a sportsman, I see."

Sandy observed, resignedly, that he feared Phillips was.

Reginald Hannyside's eyes grew bright with enthusiasm, bitter with futile regret, as he looked at his favourites. Year by year he had striven vainly, pinched himself before riches came to him, to have his representative in the National. Bought recklessly now that he could afford it, and still success eluded him. The "little queerness" which his physicians alluded to was wiped away as he peered at Delight and Red Fancy, at Hackler's Boy, and Pop-Gun. Red Fancy had run well in last month's National, finishing fifth, and had then been purchased.

"He's the one to do it," said Hannyside. "Look at him, Sandy, he's the model of a chaser. Look, man, look! The handsomest horse in England. He only wants age."

As the blue rugs fell from the mirror-like coat, Red Fancy was revealed as a great, lathering chestnut, a little over-topped, a little heavy, to please Sandy's eyes, in the shoulder; but a magnificent horse, with great quarters and powerful hocks.

"He'll do it. He must do it!" babbled his owner. "There's a horse, Alex., there's a horse."

"Remarkably fine animal, sir," said Phillips gravely.

"They must patch me up for it. I must see this fellow win. He fenced without a fault this year; he's only eight; I've never had a horse like him—never!"

Watson stood smiling benignly. Here was something which the hunting gentleman from Ireland was not likely to see. A chaser in the pride of his career, trained and fed by Mr. Thomas Watson.

"Not much amiss there, sir," said Watson condescendingly.

Sandy's views upon horses had changed since the days when he had made a complete circuit of the Crimson Rambler, and stopped aghast as he had observed the tube in that worthy animal's throat.

"Nice horse," said Sandy thoughtfully; "but——"

"Yes, sir," said Watson, with urbane condescension. "Yes, sir?"

"He looks as if he might not go on through dirt," said Sandy slowly. "Over-topped a bit, and his hocks away from him."

"Might fail in the heavy going round Currie," observed Phillips. "Would not mind a mount there all the time, sir."

"Phillips!" said Sandy sharply.

"Certainly, sir," replied Phillips, lapsing into silence.

"Sheet that 'oss," said Watson in pitying tones. "Sheet him, Joe. When the eye, sir, gets used to the cocktailed 'unter, it is difficult to judge thoroughbreds, sir," he said, kindly, as one who wished to be civil to his master's guest. "That, sir, is the best-looking chaser in England, sir. Blood, bone, stamina; faults, sir, are himpossible to find; but, of course, as I say, when the heye gits used to the cocktailed . . ."

"All long tails at Castleknock," murmured Phillips. "Missus most particular as to tails, Mr. Watson—most. Several boys killed pulling them tails, in fact—several."

"Phillips!" called Sandy again.

"Well, one was, sir," said Phillips. "Mikey Donoghan, sir."

"Killed," said Hannyside. "Killed—my God!"

"Quite unconscious for an hour, sir," said Phillips.

"Never—er—blasphemed once, until he recovered, so must have been. Took us ten minutes to tie up his bruise, and most ungracious, sir; threatened to use force with the injured limb when his head ceased swimming, sir, because the bandages were too tight. Two of Mary's dusters and a roller towel made most secure, sir."

"But then—he was not dead," said Hannyside, blinking at the valet.

"Impossible to kill an Irish boy outright, sir," said Phillips consolingly. "The worst of it was, it made Lady Locket self-willed about her tail, sir, for all that season."

"Phillips!" said Sandy again.

"This is Delight," said Mr. Watson, with polite reminder.

Delight was represented by a big, Roman-nosed head and four doubtful legs. If they could be kept right, he might yet earn brackets; but the "if" was a large one. A nervous, irritable horse; he lashed out as they came in, squealing peevishly.

The chasers of lesser repute were to be looked at next day. They passed on to Pop-Gun, a descendant of Carbines, a powerful brown, a little on the plain side, with legs of iron and perfect shoulders. A long, low horse, but no favourite of Watson's.

"A pig to eat and a pig to get to gallop," said Watson discontentedly. "But as you can't throw him down, Mr. Hannyside trains him on. We bred this one, sir."

"I like him," said Sandy, looking in, "much better than Red Fancy."

"You would, sir?" said Watson, blandly. "You—would, sir?"

The bland contempt in Watson's voice was unmistakable. He slid some more riches through his fingers, and coughed politely.

"Sheet him, Edward," he said royally. "You think they look well, sir? Horses in Ireland, I am told, very rough,

though fit to go ; but, of course, with bog peat bedding *h'and* black oats, you labour under a difficulty. 'Oss came 'ere once from Ireland—took us three days washin' 'im to clean 'im."

"It was a jarvey horse," said Hannyside apologetically. "One I bought at the show for a trapper."

Here Phillips, thoughtfully inspecting an empty ear of wheat, asked, with extreme politeness, what bog peat bedding was. "Only seeing hunters," said Mr. Phillips, with childlike curiosity, "which is bedded on straw, I should like to know."

"Bog peat beddin'," Mr. Watson said frostily, "is all they have in Ireland ; the boy who brought that there jarvey horse told me so ; and 'yallowmal,' which I imagines is maize."

"Potatoes," Phillips suggested, "is also used, Mr. Watson ; likewise bacon rinds and egg-shells ; very clearing, the latter to soup, so, no doubt, to wind—and——"

Sandy went hurriedly after his friend, who was going on to the boxes of the failures, kept luxuriously in their decline. He left Phillips and Watson to thrash out the merits of feeding stuffs as used in Ireland and England, and he felt sure that Watson would learn of several curious condiments before night.

Here was old Ben Nevis, hobbling a little, but fat and blooming ; Kathleen, a matron now, with a long-legged foal beside her ; old Rouge Royal and Cromartie.

The horses had a big paddock to range in by day ; their days of trial and stress were over.

"They did their best for me"—old Hannyside patted Ben Nevis's tan nose, "so I keep them. They'll be kept until they can't eat well, and then they'll die easily. But I'll go first, Alexander—I must go first."

Biting his thin fingers—a sudden futile blaze of wrath in his eyes. Money, science, wishing, could not keep him among his beloved horses. He was here with the rustle of straw in his ears ; with his stud all round him ; with the

new hope of his career, and there had been several, fit and well in the same box, and he must leave the horses; there was no hope.

"But I'll see Red Fancy win," he muttered. "I must see that. I must see that; the blue-and-silver shall be first yet. And if not in my time—after it—after it. I won't give up, Alex., I won't give it up."

Sandy smoked in silence. He felt that it would be cruel to ask how a dead man meant to go on racing; then suddenly he saw light.

"Heaps of life in you yet," he said gently and kindly. "You mean you're going to have the stable carried on, Reggie."

"If I don't win before I go," Hannyside muttered. "Yes; carried on. Wait—wait until you see 'em, Alexander; the heirs that must come after me—one or the other—Lord!"

"Decided yet?" Sandy inquired. "Will really fixes it?"

The look of childish cunning, so often visible in old eyes, came into Reginald Hannyside's. He said, with a low chuckle, that they would see—they would see. "And you're executor," he added, "and trustee, and everything. That's what I sent for you about—to ask you not to refuse." He stopped to pant; they were walking back. "There's a third one," he said, "a little cousin, Alexander; but not a niece or a nephew. Now if I could leave it to her—if I could—I must find my will; Alexander, and show it you. It's a puzzler, my will—and there's a codicil for you, because I don't trust Araminta."

"A—r—a—mint—a, a," sang Sandy to himself.

"Or Hildebrand," said Hannyside.

Phillips overtook them and walked respectfully in the background, until Hannyside called him up.

"You are fond of horses?" he said.

"From the days of the Crimson Rambler, sir," said Phillips, "and Holy Robin, I have adored them. Mr.

Acland, sir, won a race on the Crimson Rambler, sir; likewise on Holy Robin. Doubly, sir, same day."

"You were better at riding on a bus when I knew you," said Hannyside to Sandy.

"Horses does look wonderful well in England," went on Phillips. "Very superior gentleman, Mr. Watson."

Hannyside eyed Phillips suspiciously.

"Would like to show him the other side of the Channel, sir," said Phillips kindly. "He was quite interested in our stable methods, sir."

"Phillips," said Sandy, "get on and get my things ready."

"Certainly, sir," said Phillips cheerfully.

"Since that man," said Sandy, "came with me to Cahervalley, and married Bridget, he has been impossible. He hunts three days a week now—buys his own horses, and keeps them."

"Good gracious!—your valet," said Hannyside. "Your man!"

"Exceedingly often my master," said Acland placidly.

CHAPTER II

The matter being afoot, keep your instruction.

—*Measure for Measure.*

“MISS CYNJOHN MELLICOMBE,” announced Marston sonorously.

Mr. Hannyside's niece advanced rigidly into the room. She had cultivated rigidity as an art—in her own mind it was written maidenly dignity. When she sat down, she appeared to break in two at the waist; when she got up, she jointed into something straight and angular. She shook hands with a cold jerk; she ate with a stiff care.

Araminta was tall; she was flat chested, but heavily built; she wore an elaborate, sombre coat and skirt, and a white blouse, with a black cross suspended on a diamond-studded chain—her only ornament.

“Evenin', Araminta.” Hannyside endured a rigid peck upon his cheek with manifest resignation. “Mr. Acland—Miss Mellicombe.”

Araminta corrected her uncle by adding “Cynjohn.” She allowed herself a martyred sigh as Hannyside grunted out that she had only tacked that on because there was a saint in it.

“It was my dear departed father's name,” said Araminta gravely, “the name of an old family—so now I use it. Thank you, Marston—how thoughtful of you.”

Marston, despite the hour of six, had appeared with tea upon a tray. It was poured out, cold and strong, but Miss Mellicombe sipped it enthusiastically. She belonged to the type which is tyrannical to their own servants and apologetic to other people's.

"Parson well?" said her uncle gruffly.

"Mr. Eustace preached with fervour yesterday," said Araminta enthusiastically.

Mr. Hannyside grunted thoughtfully before he asked his niece if she had fixed the engagement.

Miss Mellicombe put down her tea-cup with some temper as she replied that the Rev. Arthur Eustace did not approve of married priests, and it certainly seemed unkind of Hannyside to remark at this point, "Then that's all right," in a tone of satisfaction.

"Mr. Hildebrand Hannyside," said Marston.

Some one said: "Oh, my dearest uncle," from the doorway. A fat and dumpy youth came hurriedly into the room. He was round-eyed and white-faced, with fat and puffy cheeks, and a soft, oily voice. An odour of white rose diffused itself from his breast pocket; his squat right hand was adorned by a heavy gold signet ring.

"My dearest uncle," he said, lovingly. "Oh—you, Araminta," the change of voice was painfully apparent.

"Yes, me—Araminta," said Miss Mellicombe, snappily for a lady of deep religious fervour.

Hildebrand wished to know how his dear uncle found himself. He asked minutely sympathetic questions as to symptoms, and in reply Reginald Hannyside grunted ill-humouredly.

Sandy was introduced, and cordially welcomed to Norton Priory. The importance of the heir-apparent lay heavily upon Hildebrand. His uncle watched him with grim but twinkling eyes.

"Whisky-and-Perrier, sir, or Apollinaris?" said Marston, appearing dutifully.

Hildebrand thanked Marston with some asperity. By this time was he, Marston, not aware that he, Hildebrand, did not imbibe alcoholic beverages. He took some Apollinaris and sipped it languidly. Marston had brought in a salver with a variety of drinks.

"Chilly stuff," said old Hannyside. "You wouldn't be

so pasty, boy, if you took your whack. Here, Saint Araminta, you will have the cocktail appetizer, hey?"

Miss Mellicombe arose rigidly, spoke sorrowfully of a small appetite, and took a cocktail from Marston, while Mr. Hildebrand sat uneasily upon his chair, and glared disapproval.

"Mrs. Stanard wishes to know, sir"—the butler directed two footmen to take away the trays—"if Miss Knox will require the pink room to-night?"

For the first time Araminta and Hildebrand looked at each other with some show of sympathy. Miss Mellicombe muttered "the typist" scornfully, and Mr. Hildebrand sighed.

"Yes," said Hannyside shortly. "Did not the motor go to the train from London?"

With dismayed apologies Hildebrand regretted that he had sent the motor to Northlap for some things he had forgotten to bring. The car was not yet back.

The thunderous look with which uncle eyed nephew did not speak of love.

A second car was being dispatched, when a small girl walked in through the open French window. Mollie Knox was pretty in an unassertive fashion. She had sunny hair and grey eyes, and a sad little mouth. She walked to her cousin and shook hands with him quietly. Yet Reginald Hannyside's face grew visibly brighter.

"Moll," he said, "Moll, walking up from the station?"

"I borrowed the bicycle of the stationmaster's wife," said Mollie placidly, "and it sounds like a French exercise but that way. No thank you, Marston. I will wait for dinner. How d'ye do, Araminta? How d'ye do, Hildebrand?"

Araminta gave condescending greeting. In the majesty of her handshake it was evident that she thanked God that she, Araminta, was not a typist. Hildebrand was remotely polite, with the faint resentment of the heir who fears that a small legacy may be taken from him.

Sandy sat silent, with a growing conviction that he had never disliked two people more heartily than he disliked Araminta and Hildebrand.

Araminta possessed the clipped drawl of the ultra-refined; Hildebrand murmured with the oily modesty of the elect; and open antipathy flashed from niece to nephew whenever the two pairs of optics met.

Sandy sat and watched. He was the audience in the stalls. Sometimes he saw old Hannyside grin as if some hidden joke was pleasing him, and then grunt and mutter, and sometimes he could see the flicker of pain beating down the old Adam of humour—the pain which must grow greater until it changed its name to death.

Araminta toyed with her long chain and played the fine lady as she lounged and drawled. Hildebrand was pained by any allusions to topical subjects; he sat suddenly upon *The Daily Mail*, because a tale of the Divorce Court was on the exposed sheet; he groaned over the awful wreck of a monster liner.

"To go down unregenerate—unsaved," said Hildebrand tragically.

Here his uncle remarked dryly that he presumed that if Hildebrand were on a wreck he could happily eschew life-belts with the upper decks awash, as he would no doubt like to move on to be a saint.

Hildebrand looked pained, and faintly doubtful. He said: "No; for he considered life a sacred charge—one to be taken care of."

"To-morrow," said Hannyside suddenly, "you shall see my new horse, Hildebrand—the best horse in England."

Hildebrand turned up the whites of his round eyes dolefully. He was understood to murmur that he wished there were no racehorses.

"Oh, how lovely!" said Mollie enthusiastically.

"Do you a heap of good to back a winner," Hannyside grunted to his nephew. "Cheer you up. Very well, Hall—I'm ready."

The sick man took some time to dress. He went off early with his man, with Mollie Knox beside him, her quiet little face set in real sorrow for the slow, painful movements.

Sandy got up. The echo of the gong still vibrated in the hall—a sonorous, ponderous gong. He thought of the peevish bell which had never been replaced at Droveen; he smiled and sighed simultaneously—and of Nora running in. . . .

“Gracious, Sarah! I’m late again.”

“An’ Mrs. Magee sayin’ the beef is rags in the oven, ma’m; but she’s peevish, an’ she roastin’ always.”

Ireland was Ireland, even to the rich.

“Mr. Acland”—Araminta unhinged herself from a sitting position with a jerk. “Mr. Acland—as an old friend of my uncle’s——”

Sandy looked in the glass and grunted. He declined to feel old.

“As an old friend,” said Araminta, “could you not persuade the dear old man to give up racehorses? They are a snare of the devil, Mr. Acland.”

“A constant temptation to the weak,” said Hildebrand heavily. “I would not keep a racehorse—it cannot be kept righteously.”

“Fine sport owning racehorses,” said Sandy cheerily. “Of course, if you feel you are too weak or too keen on money to run straight, you are better without ’em. I had a couple and did no damage to my conscience; but if you do feel like that, avoid ’em, my boy. I understand, some fellows are weak.”

Hildebrand Hannyside staggered, he flung out his arms, mentally winded by this blow upon his heart; he subsided heavily, not upon the chair he had risen from, but upon the angular lap of Araminta, and thereby breaking her fine chain into several fragments.

That Araminta was not quite devoid of humour was marked by the fact that she jigged her stout cousin up and

down on her powerful knee, and giggled: "Oh, my goodness, Hildebrand, what a naughty mind you've got!" through the giggle.

Sandy was at the door and softly whistling "Love's young dream" when Hildebrand found his tottering feet, and his voice.

"Sir," he began, "Mr. Acland! Wait! Sir, do you imagine that I, a member of Greater Bethel Congregation, was thinking of keeping racehorses," Hildebrand choked, "because, I thought I—would get——"

"Cold soup," said Sandy cheerily, "it's ten to eight. Keep it all for dinner, my boy. English cooks have detestable habits of looking at clocks—and mind your cousin's chain."

Sandy fled from the sound of an upraised, choking voice.

"Phillips," he said solemnly, "I should not like to live in the house with young Mr. Hannyside. It would become too cheap, Phillips, my lodging—afterwards."

Phillips looked interrogation as he fastened a shirt cuff.

"I should live at His Majesty's expense for justifiable homicide," said Sandy gloomily. "I wish, I wish, that the missus was here," Phillips.

"Yes, sir. Black or white pearl studs, sir?"

"Black," said Sandy emphatically. "Phillips, how did we come to be English, Phillips?"

"Father and mother's fault, sir," said Phillips sympathetically. "No choice, sir. Yes, the gong, sir."

Hildebrand Hannyside's ruffled humour had not been soothed by a flurried attiring of his plump person. In his own home he did not dress for dinner. There was often an evening meeting of his congregation, and discussions upon subjects of the day. When various wrongs of earth had been completely condemned by some twenty Greater Bethelites, it was often a shock to see a report in next day's paper that the wrongs were going forward uninterrupted. Hildebrand also wrote letters to the papers on

subjects of enthralling interest, such as the appearance of the first swallow, a strawberry blossom in bloom in March ; or the cruel wrongs endured by pedestrians when motorists were unable to keep the dust down as they passed. Here he was obliged to change, and the inexorable march of the clock toward eight made him extremely irritable. He was aware of a white tie which sagged and struggled from its clumsy confinement, or a crumpled shirt front, and socks too thick for his new pumps.

Phillips meeting the fat youth upon the stairs, coughed softly as he went down to help to wait at dinner.

Miss Araminta Mellicombe was encased in a gorgeous suit of sequins, which rattled and shimmered as she moved. She wore some handsome rubies on her large neck, and her dull hair was surmounted by a flight of diamond butterflies.

Mr. Hannyside, looking at his niece and nephew, said something softly which alluded to dances, for Hildebrand's coat had tails.

Mollie Knox, in something light and becoming, was immersed in a feast of weekly papers.

Dinner was heavy, but excellent. With the ostentation of the truly good, Hildebrand drew a carafe of water before his plate, and set it there as a silent sermon to wine bibbers about him.

Araminta drank champagne cheerfully. Mollie took a light but precious hock. It was evident from the first that Hildebrand's injured feelings were only waiting to pour forth in protest, and that he had a great deal to say.

"With reference; Mr. Acland," he began, peering across a bank of flowers to look at Sandy, "to the—er—misunderstanding before dinner."

"My dear boy, as Miss Mellicombe didn't mind," said Sandy, kindly, "as she didn't mind your sitting on her knee."

Here Mollie Knox laughed softly, and even Marston smiled.

"I referred to racing, the—to racing," spluttered Hildebrand, growing red at his uncle's chuckle.

"Racing," said Sandy, taking some forced asparagus, "is an innocent and sporting amusement, debased by men who have turned it into an equine stock exchange."

"Good gracious, Alex.! You never used to be witty," said Mr. Hannyside quickly.

"I am not. It's Nora, she said that." Sandy spoke with the pride of the man who believes there is only one woman on earth, and that woman his wife.

"I wonder, if I had ever known a Nora."—Reginald Hannyside spoke almost under his breath—"but my sister and brother married—and—the results"—he looked first at Hildebrand, who was leaning across the table with his mouth open, ready to speak, and at the gorgeous Araminta sitting stiffly upright in her armour of sequins.

Hildebrand found a space to thrust his sword of oratory. He began to talk fluently. He denounced, not racing, for he caught his uncle's eye, but the temptations of the race-courses. The few men who raced for sport alone—here he bowed towards the head of the table—could not redeem the masses who seethed and struggled and cheated and plotted.

"And it all leads to drink," champed Hildebrand. "Excitement, long hours, losses or gains, make thirst, thirst, sir—thirst. Bookmakers hoarse from yelling, must drink. *They* do not cool their throats with pure, sweet water"—Hildebrand took up the carafe proudly—"they must mix it with alcoholic stimulants."

"Thanks, Marston—no duckling as yet. I must listen," said Sandy to the butler.

"With inferior stimulants—making man at first merry, then irritable, then a beast. I say that one cannot grow excited or talk much without undue thirst—even now, after my brief discourse——" he poured some of the contents of the carafe into his tumbler and took a long drink, then with a spluttering yell, he shot to his feet.

"I believe Bob has bitten him," said Mr. Hannyside,

without excess of grief. "What is it, Hildebrand? Slap his back, Marston—hard—he's choking."

Marston obeyed with respectful zeal, Phillips rendering aid with drops of cold water sprinkled briskly on the nape of Hildebrand's neck.

"It—was—whisky," screamed Hildebrand, "in the jug." He sat down pale and exhausted. "In the jug."

"Not at all—in the glass, sir," said Phillips, gently "Best Irish, sir—uncoloured. Knew you must take Irish as you had the water ready, and selected it myself, sir, on Marston's recommendation. A liqueur whisky, sir."

"Phillips!" said Sandy helplessly, as he met his man's expressionless eyes.

"Whisky—for me—I, who never even eat trifle," groaned Hildebrand.

He looked round at faces which could not keep serious. Mollie Knox was laughing openly and unrestrainedly; Hannyside chuckled softly; Sandy grinned; Araminta ejaculated, "Oh, my goodness, Hildebrand!" through metallic giggles; Marston, purple of face—he had endured many lectures as to his beer—shook visibly by the sideboard; Phillips was alone grave; woodenly unemotional, he padded softly to the sideboard and returned with a decanter.

"Regretting the mistake, sir. Shall I change your glass for brandy, sir?" he said solicitously.

"Man—do you not know that I am a teetotaller?" Hildebrand plucked a blue ribbon from his buttonhole, and thrust it at Phillips.

Phillips laid it gravely upon the cut-glass stopper of the brandy decanter.

"Thank you, sir—excuse me, sir. Naturally took it for an order, sir," he said. He carried the decanter carefully to the sideboard, with the blue ribbon adorning its iniquitous presence.

"I have not," said Hannyside, two minutes later, "laughed so much for a year."

Phillips and Marston had left the room.

"Is—is—it stupidity, Alex.?" he went on, turning to gaze at the decanter.

"I—fear—*not*," said Mr. Acland dryly.

Miss Mellicombe bade the depressed Hildebrand cheer up.

"It won't count, as you didn't know; and it will do you a heap of good," she said maliciously. "You finished the glassful, didn't you?"

The plunging of the cousins into furious argument concerning alcohol and religion left the other three free to talk of less important matters.

What Sandy wondered as he looked across the table at Mollie, was why Hannyside did not abandon the ties of blood and leave his money to this pretty child. A typist—the word made Sandy remember his first wife—the Irish girl who had worked until she died in cruel, splendid London.

"You do well at it?" he asked Mollie gently.

"As well as one can do. I have a permanent place. And Cousin Reginald gives me three holidays a year. I love to see the horses here," she answered brightly.

"You'd like to win a National, then?" Sandy asked, smiling.

Miss Knox said she thought she would like to ride in one. She knew all the old favourites by name; she watched for them in the papers. Sandy made a mental resolve that, when his old friend passed into the unknown, he would ask Mollie to Castleknock and give her a horse to ride when she was there.

"You cannot call it real"—the raised voices of the combatants made the two elder men turn to listen—"you drink champagne, wear jewels, deny yourself nothing."

Araminta retorted hotly that the Reverend Arthur Eustace was *her* guide, and she was content to abide by his teaching.

Hildebrand's quotation referred to ditches and two blind people. He expressed, at some length, his absolute cer-

tainty that no person who did not belong to a religion devoid of show, such as his, and who did not content themselves with water to drink, and cold mutton for supper on Sundays, with tea made over a spirit lamp, could be on the right path.

"But why mutton?" broke in Sandy suddenly. "Now, why mutton?"

"To save the maids trouble," snapped Hildebrand. "How can a cook think of her future on the Sabbath if she is plunged to the neck in entrées and sweets?"

Mollie hinted softly that one might be more likely to think of soap and water.

"But mutton?" repeated Sandy. "Why not chicken or beef, or galantine? Why mutton?"

Hildebrand coloured and sniffed. He said haughtily that mutton was merely symbolical, and of a simple nature. He glared at Araminta as she lighted her cigarette.

"You'd be so much better if you smoked, Hildebrand," said his uncle sharply. "It's natural and manlike."

Young Mr. Hannyside was understood to remark that he reserved the money which he might have spent on cigarettes for the benefit of the widows and orphans of reformed men on the Caribbean Islands, where they sent a mission.

His uncle, as he lighted a cigar, observed drily that probably widows of reformed natives had become a drug in the market now upon that island, and met his nephew's suspicious glance with a faint grin.

It was not a pleasant dinner. During dessert Araminta and Hildebrand became friendly, as they combined to lecture their uncle upon the evils of his racing stable.

"Dreadful thing, racing," he said, "dreadful. You would not either of you own a racehorse, hey?"

Araminta said that before she gave old copies to the poor, she had even gummed together the pages of weekly journals containing photographs of racehorses.

Hildebrand said the Greater Bethelites had a special weekly prayer for those in peril on the turf.

Throughout the lecture Mr. Hannyside looked from one to the other with the same curiously thoughtful look which always fell on him as he studied nephew or niece.

"The only way to get me out of it, is to win a National," he said dryly. "When the colours come in front at Aintree, I retire—so put in a special prayer for Red Fancy next year, Hildebrand. You wouldn't mind a few race-horses, Mollie, hey?"

Mollie Knox said eagerly that she could do with anything on four legs with a mane and a tail. "If they couldn't race they could hunt," she said a little wistfully.

"You are never very likely to hunt," said Araminta coldly.

"Who knows?" said Hannyside, "the fairy prince may wear a pink coat. Now get along, and you too, Hildebrand; go and sing hymns to your cousins. I have to talk business here."

"Look at 'em," said Reginald Hannyside wrathfully. "Look at 'em. And to think I ate bread-and-milk with their father and their mother. But May died when Araminta was born; she killed her; so she was left to her fooling father and an aunt; and Tom, my brother, was in the same boat."

Sandy murmured sympathetically that apparently Araminta ought to have been named Azrael.

Hannyside grunted, and grinned; he also called Sandy an idiot. "Tom did not die for five years later, but he left his wife free to marry a Tower of Bethel, and Hildebrand's the result of the upbringing. And yet—I suppose I ought to leave 'em my money and my place—because they're my relations."

"If you divide the house between them, I fancy Marston will give notice," said Sandy thoughtfully.

Reginald Hannyside leant back in his chair and chuckled deeply. "They'll see—you'll see," he said. "They're

counting me dead already. Hildebrand is yearning for the hour when he can abolish those stables, and have a teetotal butler to wait on him. Araminta dreams of the family diamonds, and the Reverend Eustace for a spouse. I promised 'em once I'd divide up. There's little Moll, too, to get something. Look here, Alexander, you'll see it through—promise—you'll see my will through for me as executor and trustee?"

Sandy promised quietly, with a tightness at his throat. For, sitting in his fine old room, with everything which money could buy before him, this old friend of his must talk of death as something which must come to him, and come soon. Now and again a spasm of pain would send grey shadows across the pale face, as if the grim waiter sent reminder.

The electric light glowed on fruit and flowers; on old cut glass and silver; the man was vigorously alive, and yet there was no respite. The fight for money bruises and tears; it is carried out in airless places; it means constant strain, constant worry. Is it good that we turn to go at the last holding a sackful of sovereigns, if our limbs have lost the power to lift them; if our lungs cannot drink in the pure air we have earned the power to rest in?

God made His glorious world for man, and man made towns and great buildings for himself. If he stifles in them away from open spaces, from the murmur of clear waters, from the cool, sweet air blowing across them, from rain and sunshine, and wood and field, it is his own will and his way.

Reginald Hannyside was very rich. Sandy might have been the same if he had struggled on in his office, but as he reflected sapiently, he would also have been dead, and he sighed a sigh of longing for the scent of peat on a wet west wind, with the grey sky, loosened, sailing rudderless overhead.

"You were a fool to go away to vegetate, Alex.," Hannyside's voice roused Sandy from his dreams. "You

can't have retired on anything really worth while—and you got out of everything in a senseless way."

Sandy said cheerfully that if he had stayed on he would have got out of it all in the most everyday way in the world. "Feet foremost—to Woking," said Sandy, recalling his irritation years before when he had passed the garden cemetery.

"You've changed so much," Hannyside went on. "You were the shrewdest of business men, and now you—you talk of hammers and nails when oak is wanted, and you don't seem to know a bull from a bear."

"I know a horse from a donkey, though," said Sandy. "One must breathe to live, Reggie. I nearly went out, but dear old Grattan stopped me in time. Sent me off for a rest cure which was nearly permanent, and then to Ireland, where I found Nora, and stayed.

"I should like," went on Sandy, "to see Nora and Kathleen talking to Araminta. Nora, who only knows what o'clock it is on a hunting morning, and often forgets that she is asked out to dinner. She has also quite forgotten to grow old," said Sandy happily.

"But you're business man enough still to carry it all through for me, Alex. I'll get the will and send it to you. It's locked away in my house near Paris—or if it's not there, it's in Scotland. It is so difficult to imagine oneself dead, that I have made arrangements so as to pretend I am alive. Now come and suggest Bridge. I fret if I think for too long."

As Sandy walked into the drawing-room, he wondered whether the heir and the heiress would have quite as good a time as they thought they would. There was some grim joke in his old friend's mind.

Araminta liked fresh air, and Hildebrand detested it—so one window was flung wide enough to set the heavy curtains flapping, and one was carefully closed. Hildebrand had retreated as far from the draught as he could without going to bed. He was playing a patience with some skill,

cheating freely when it would not come out. Mollie sat by the fire, occasionally answering a condescending question from her distant cousin.

To Sandy's surprise, Hildebrand could play Bridge, but, of course, not for money. Araminta, it appeared, was a skilled player, but would not play for nothing. It ended in the cousins having to play together, Sandy gambling against Araminta at half a crown a hundred, and Reginald Hannyside playing sardonically for love against his nephew.

There was a great deal to think of besides the cards, Sandy told Nora afterwards, for before the first game was over Miss Mellicombe had reached a state of rigid fury at good cards wasted, and Hildebrand oozed irritation moistly. His desire to return comment as biting as he received, upset his faint grip of the game. So that when Araminta, playing the heart, doubled, and he led her a spade from five to the jack, Sandy spent a patient two minutes picking the cards from the floor, his polite inquiry as to whether they should deal again or sort this lot out, being received with chill rage from Araminta. A further deal having been decided, Sandy was pleased to see he held a hundred aces, and equally pleased to make a grand slam. He took nineteen shillings, made up at the last by threepenny pieces, which Araminta said peevishly she had been keeping for collections; and he went to bed. The cousins were not then on speaking terms.

When Phillips brought him tea in the morning, Sandy sighed, and tried to imagine that he was at Castleknock, but the silence of the house was too intense. There was no infuriated yapping from Nora's terriers as they endeavoured to deter the workmen from entering the yard. No hails from Bridget the parlour-maid to Sarah the dairy-maid requesting "crame that minyit, or her head 'd be whipped from her, for the missus's bell was whirrin' this five minyits for tay, an' the masther wouldn't do without crame in his."

Here there was the silence of the perfectly ordered house, where heavy doors shut out sound, and the men outside work silently as they roll and mow and clip.

Phillips put down the tea ; it was cold and too strong. He tweaked the heavy blinds up so that spring sunshine poured in through the open window, but he was careful to avoid the aggressive habit of the housemaids who swish the blind back to its socket and dazzle half-open eyes with a glare of light.

"Nice horses down there, sir," said Phillips cheerfully, "specially Red Fancy, sir. Might make a bit next National on him, sir."

Mr. Acland remarked firmly that he preferred Pop-Gun.

"Mr. Watson, sir, informs me Pop-Gun lacks speed, sir. Was not astonished at your preference, the horse being more hunter like than the other, sir. But Red Fancy, sir, for my money. Delight's legs gone, sir."

Sandy eyed his valet thoughtfully. It was evident that in the depths of Phillips's mind his master was still the London man who knew nothing, and he, Phillips, was the superior judge of racers.

"I do not think," said Sandy, when he returned from his bath, "I do not think, Phillips, that we shall any of us see Red Fancy run next year from this stable. Mr. Hannyside is very ill, Phillips."

"He should have given up work as you did, sir," said Phillips gently. "Saved you, sir. I do not think, sir"—Phillips sorted sleeve links carefully—"that Mr. Hildebrand Hannyside will do much in the racing line, sir. Dreadful accident, sir, concerning whisky last night—most regretful."

"Especially as you did it on purpose, Phillips," observed Mr. Acland grimly.

"Sir!" said Phillips, gravely outraged, but an unvalet-like and unholy twinkle lit his eyes. "Really, sir," said Phillips, turning away.

The only cheerful thing at breakfast was Mollie Knox,

and the blue riband on the decanter. Araminta's obvious peevishness followed her rush in a motor to early service at Northlap. Prayers did not seem to have left her temper smooth. Hildebrand was weighed down by the knowledge that he could not attend his particular form of worship. Hannyside was weary from a sleepless night. The cousins snapped at each other over hot cakes and honey, Hildebrand discoursing on the wrong done to the cook as he ate his fourth, her mind for the day would have been disturbed, he declared, by baking.

Araminta said politely that all that nonsense was put on, and if cooks were not there to cook what were they there for, also that Hildebrand need not eat hot bread if it offended his conscience.

"We will go to the stables after breakfast," said Hannyside. "Hildebrand has no forks to play on. Araminta has had the car out once, and Mollie can go to kirk at six if she feels inclined."

When Reginald Hannyside spoke in that tone, his heirs grew meek and obeyed. Until a man is dead, he can always alter that last weapon, his will. They quarrelled with each other, and they remonstrated when they found opportunity, but the old man could subdue them when he chose.

Araminta murmured something about racing stables on Sundays, and Hildebrand heaved a sigh which fluttered the flame of the spirit lamp, but they did not disobey.

"We will drive in the small car," said Hannyside, "and Hildebrand shall walk, because he is a stone too heavy. He can go on."

The small car, which was a fourteen-twenty Wolseley painted cerulean blue, buzzed to the door with Mr. Phillips in the driving-seat, urbane and undisturbed.

"Chauffeur suffering from slight vertigo, sir; effect of early rising without food," Phillips explained. "Drive regularly at home, sir, so ventured to offer services, if not inconvenient, sir."

Now, as Sandy had driven for years, and Phillips was quite unnecessary, he looked at his man with comprehensive eyes, but he said nothing. Phillips did not wish to miss a visit to the stables.

"Phillips is an excellent driver," he said dryly; "you can trust him, Reggie."

This visit to the stables was a thing to be remembered.

Araminta and Hildebrand looked bitterly at the horses; at the depths of expensive wheaten straw; at the boys who lounged about in their Sunday clothes; at the trainer's pretty, creeper-covered house.

"To think," said Araminta, "of all which could be done with the money spent here—of the stained windows and vestments."

"Of the missions," said Hildebrand.

"Of the treats to respectable poor," snapped Araminta.

"Of——"

"Oh! you wouldn't keep 'em five minutes," grunted their uncle angrily. "No fear! All the money in the world wouldn't make you, hey?"

His face was lighted up by the sudden cunning which crosses the faces of the old. The malice of too much knowledge and the foolish mischief of the very young seem to meet and combine. "Not even to please me, hey?" he said, flashing his eyes on Red Fancy.

"Oh, of course, if you wished it, dear uncle," said Araminta hastily, thinking that this was a case where diplomacy might pay.

"You wouldn't, hey?" the old man wheeled on Hildebrand, who was staring moodily at Red Fancy's nose.

"Racehorses," said Hildebrand stiffly, "cannot be kept by a person of really strict principles. No, uncle, I fear I shall never carry on the stud."

"Not even for money, hey?" chuckled his uncle. "Well, I must only win my race before I go."

Hildebrand immediately expressed a fervent wish tha

his uncle might win many things before the inevitable happened, and that he must not think of the said inevitable, or talk of it as if it was near.

Sandy strolled away, to find Mollie feeding the old favourites with carrots.

"I wonder if they remember," she said half sadly, "when they were polished and galloped and trained, and came out to strive and gallop. Now they only eat and sleep, poor things."

Sandy thought they were probably much happier. "They never have any youth," he said; "they learn what whips and spurs mean when their hunter cousins are playing on the grass; they are stabled and fed and forced, and I think they must be glad to rest."

"If I ever have a little money," Mollie said dreamily—"Cousin Reginald has told me I am to have some—I will have a little place and two dear horses and several dogs, and I shall hunt. I have seen the hounds near here in winter, and the pink coats, and the people jumping and galloping, and heard the hounds barking, and I must do it some time."

Sandy said thoughtfully that she could bark now, but he didn't think it would be satisfactory on a Sunday.

Mollie said good-humouredly that he was an owl; but she listened, wide-eyed, to tales of Irish hunting, until her cheeks were pink from excitement.

"I'll do it," she said. "I'll come to your country, Mr. Acland, and you shall buy me Blackbirds; and I'll like to take you." She patted Bennevis's nose.

"It's so ripping of Cousin Reggie," Mollie added, "to keep the old friends."

A voice behind her retorted it was absolutely idiotic. It calculated the minimum cost of a horse's yearly keep, and remarked coldly that Christian minds must remember how that money could be used. "If they are too young to die, there are four-wheeled cabs to be drawn," said Hildebrand callously.

"I'd rather shoot an old favourite than sell him to a cab," said Mollie hotly.

Young Mr. Hannyside replied that she did not appear to calculate the loss of fifteen to twenty pounds, which would be the result of the shooting. He looked viciously at the boxes holding the cast racers—thought how swiftly they should pass when he came to his reign here.

"Nonsense—sentimental rubbish," he said, with the heavy conviction of the young man who has never had his ideas widened out and the edges rubbed off.

Then Hildebrand thought the yard might conveniently be let later on. He explained that he objected to waste.

"A farmer would take it," he said.

Watson, the trainer, wasted no blandishments upon Hildebrand. He looked at the youth with a certain bitter resignation, realizing that his post as trainer would end when his present master died. Watson was superior, but he wanted to win a National; he sighed now, and talked to Phillips.

"An' she would no doubt be just as bad a hegg," said Mr. Phillips, in sympathetic response to a remark of Watson's.

"She'd be wuss," said Watson briefly.

Faintly brightened by bickerings between Araminta and Hildebrand, Sunday dragged to a close. Hildebrand looked nervous when Araminta admired a piece of furniture; Araminta got crimson when he talked about diamonds going with the name.

They were down there, merely waiting for what they could get, and their uncle was completely aware of their view of the case. His half-childish, half-malignant chuckle often came to his lips when he looked at the two.

Sandy was leaving for Ireland next night. He said he could not stay away because there were two young horses to take in. But before he left, the surprise of the day was the arrival of the Rev. Arthur Eustace to luncheon.

Mr. Hannyside explained his urgent wire on the plea of

the wish to give ; but he fluttered a faint wink towards Sandy as he made the explanation.

The clergyman was a thin young man, deeply in earnest, and obsessed by love of his work. He blushed sometimes when Araminta looked at him lovingly, and though it was completely evident that he did not return her love—that she would eventually marry him was extremely probable, for Araminta was a lady of firm will.

“But—that is all right,” said Hannyside, when a motor had carried off the Rev. Eustace to the station. “I wanted to see if he would suffer—before”—he chuckled maliciously—“before I was quite certain, Alex. He’s a good soul, the parson. Come in here,” he said ; “you’ve half an hour yet, and there are certain things to be said.”

Hannyside put a thick, sealed letter into Sandy’s hands. “To be opened by you when one Grand National has passed after my death,” he said. “See, Alexander? Put it away at your lawyer’s——”

Araminta and Hildebrand said good-bye to Sandy with complete lack of regret. They stood upon the steps—heir and heiress—each bitterly resenting the other’s existence ; each absolutely certain of a large legacy. Both already counting on future reforms.

“And I wonder,” said Sandy to himself, “if there is something in that will which will surprise you both.”

CHAPTER III

And bleat the one at the other.

—*Winter's Tale.*

"MR. HANNYSIDE died last night. One of his last requests was that you should be wired for at once. Allenbury. Northlap."

"There, now!" said Sandy Acland mournfully. "Poor old Reggie! And I must go to-night."

Nora Acland, a slim woman, who ought to have looked middle-aged and didn't, put down a fishing rod in dismay.

"Good gracious! with the green drake just on Loch Corro," she said. "And we are showing three horses next week. But you must be back for that, Sandy. Michael says you might ride Maybird if you liked."

Sandy remarked dryly that he appreciated Michael's kindness; he rang the bell peevishly.

"Send Phillips here," he said to Delia.

Delia looked dubiously at the early June sunshine. She said she thought that she had "seen Mr. Phillips makin' down for the lake with a rod, but she wasn't rightly sure."

"Make after him then," commanded Sandy with unwonted heat. "Make after him. He has to pack my things. Phillips!"

"God bless an' save us," was Delia's audible remark outside the door. "Make after him, an' he in the wather be now, takin' his aise. Phill—ips!" shrieked Delia shrilly. "Mickey, can ye lay ye're hand on Phillips—the masther wants him in a hurry."

"Did you call, sir?" Phillips appeared suddenly at the window.

"I did not—I yelled," said Sandy. "They told me you had gone fishing, Phillips. Pack! We've got to go back to Northlap Priory."

"Mr. Hannyside being, so to speak, dead, sir," suggested Phillips, with respectful sympathy, and a look at the telegram. "I, in fact, met Mickey Beate on the avenue, sir, and he appeared to have some garbled version of bad news, so I came back, sir. Cruelly bad luck, sir—dreadfully distressing."

Sandy looked at his man, and credited him with more good feeling than he had quite realized.

"And Red Fancy, *such* a likely 'oss, sir," said Phillips mournfully. "Had already made a combination of several doubles, sir."

"Phillips," said Nora briskly, "you are——"

"I will see to the packing, sir," said Phillips, getting to the door. "And I rather fear there may be trouble over there."

Sandy had gone out dolefully to talk to the dogs, and stroke the nose of his pet hunter, which grazed outside the iron palings.

"How's that?" Nora put away fishing tackle regretfully.

"Old Mr. Hannyside, ma'am, not quite——" Phillips tapped his own sleek hair. "Very old, madam. His man, in fact, told me that Mr. Hannyside disliked Miss Mellicombe and Mr. Hannyside, junior; might leave somethin' queer in his will, ma'am. In fact, it appears he took a peep when he was witnessing. Trust there will be no prolonged absence from home, ma'am."

"Nora," Sandy ran back. "Hannyside didn't die in Paris, as he died in England."

Nora said this appeared probable.

"He was going for the will," said Sandy excitedly. "He wrote and told me so. If—if—there is any bother which keeps me over there away from the hay and the horses and the fish, I—I—shall be extremely annoyed, Nora. I'll never take on trusteeships again."

"I have my fears, sir," said Phillips gravely.

"Phillips—go to blazes," exploded Acland, with the usual gratitude of a man when he is agreed with and does not want to be.

"Certainly, sir—just a suit-case, I suppose, sir," said Phillips, going out.

"He might have waited until July," said Sandy dolefully. "You'll drive me in, Nora. And Alex.——"

"If you take Alex. you may rope him," said Mrs. Acland, callously. "He climbed out over the back of the car the last day to see if the exhaust pipe was tired, and I drove into a donkey cart, when Maria began to scream. Fortunately, it was Mrs. Ryan's cart, and she said she had wanted a new one for some time, and that the ass was a blessed riddance. No, Sandy, if you want your son, you may tie him in."

"Nora! Are you ready," cried a voice outside. "We've got heaps of luncheon—but we forgot to put in any butter, or milk, and you'd better bring the cups. I think by the sound, ours are broken already."

"It would be easy for them the way you put them in," said Standish Blundell's gloomy voice.

Kathleen Ievers laughed the laugh of the completely happy woman. Having banished her stately mother-in-law to Dublin, she was without a care on earth. Standish Blundell sat at the back of the car, indifferently packed in among fishing rods and baskets.

Standish was big and dark and taciturn; a man who seldom smiled, and whose deep voice rang with a melancholy which its owner never intended to put there.

"Sandy is going to a funeral—instead of fishing," said Nora, appearing, wrapped in gloom, at the door. "And Phillips is going with him, and I have to drive him there—so——"

"Good gracious, Nora! Whose funeral are you driving the car to?" said Mrs. Ievers, amazed. "And there isn't any one dead either—no one alive died this week, did they?"

Her husband remarked mildly that he was quite sure no one had died—alive or no.

"Well, he's dead, anyhow," said Nora. "That old Hannyside man, who was a friend of Sandy's long ago. And Sandy's executor or something, and there are two tiresome people he hates over there, and probably he thinks he may have to take some of the old racehorses—and I'll fish to-morrow instead, Kathleen."

Kathleen got out of the car and kissed her sister affectionately. She then sat down disconsolately upon the stone steps, remarking that she had brought far too many jam tarts.

"They are the kind Sandy likes," said Kathleen levers dolefully; "cherry jam and sweet short crust—so bad for him."

Standish Blundell looked at the clock upon the motor-car. He remarked slowly that as Sandy had to go, why, he'd better go, but their waiting would stop it, and it was twenty miles to the lake.

"It's that old racing fellow, isn't it?" said Standish, getting into the car again. "Kathleen, how many shares have you got in the china shop at Cahervalley?"

"None," said Kathleen stiffly.

Standish observed gloomily it was only the rattle when he hit the tea-basket which made him ask.

"It's that racing fellow, isn't it?" said Standish again. "Here, don't start her, Neil. Wait! Hi, there! Sandy!"

Sandy thrust his sunburnt face out of an upper window. Phillips appeared spasmodically near another—packing rapidly, and evidently asking questions.

"Go away, Standish," he said, "I've no time. Yes, the tail coat, Phillips, not the frock, and for God's sake don't forget my top hat. What is it, Standish? If I've only a hunting one, Phillips, I must take a hunting one. I will not stop on the way to buy another—most extravagant. Well, Standish? I cannot help the dinge the last day I fell, Phillips—brush it well."

"That was the day it saved your life, when the mare put you over her head at the big wall," said Standish. "God help us, Sandy, if you wouldn't jig in and out of the window like a blind in a draught I could say what I wanted to and get on. There'll be a sale of the horses over there, won't there?"

"There is sure to be," said Sandy. "I tell you, Phillips, I will not buy another. Oh, go on, Standish. I can't help the dinge. They may say I've hunted in the hat if they like! Phillips!"

Phillips's imperturbable face appeared at the next window; he held the top hat in his hand for Standish to see. Mr. Blundell, looking up, remarked gravely that the hat looked more like going to its own funeral than any one else's, but he supposed Sandy knew best.

"Phillips," said Sandy furiously, poking farther out, "put that hat into the case. Go on, Standish!"

"As I was saying," remarked Standish sadly, "about that sale of horses. If they throw away any odd thoroughbred racers over there, mares, I'll take a couple. Don't forget, Sandy. Tell the auctioneer to give you a short knock. D'ye hear? San-dy!"

For Sandy had withdrawn with a snort and a grin.

It was exceedingly careless of Phillips at this point to drop the hat; and doubly unfortunate that it should have impaled itself upon Standish's gaff, which he was holding in his hand, the dinge being now further augmented by a cut in the crown.

Phillips came rushing down to its rescue, apologising deeply.

"Dreadfully careless of me, sir—dreadfully; but not a proper hat for England, sir," said Phillips gravely. "Must break it to Mr. Acland, sir—latest accident to hat, sir."

"He aimed it fair for the gaff," said Standish dolefully, as the car slipped off.

It took Sandy Acland so many minutes at the post office to compress his telegram down to sixpenny length

that he had to open the throttle to catch the mail train. It left him no time to buy the new hat, which was now quite necessary, and he reached his carriage with a sense of breathless haste which made him irritable. His last glimpse of his wife's pretty face was too fleeting, and at least half a dozen injunctions were forgotten.

Leaving Ireland always made Sandy melancholy. The run through the brown bog of Allen reminded him of his illness and his weak heart. Even now, travelling in a train set it thumping.

There was a passably rough crossing, with enough roll to make dubious sailors exceedingly green, and Sandy had reached the humour which objects to everything when he got into the train at Holyhead. He considered a sleeper extravagant, but Phillips tipped a guard to reserve a carriage, and put the tip down to various other items which he had not wasted money on. Phillips was careful of his master's health.

It was eleven on a cold, bright May morning, when they drove up to Northlap Priory. Early summer had been using a powder-puff lavishly. The park was splashed with blooming whitethorn. Near the house rhododendrons blazed crimson and pink and white. It was trim and well kept, but the sad chill which death brings lay on the house which Sandy had left in its normal state. Blinds veiled the windows; a group of strange men, fresh from some grim task of preparation for the morrow's funeral, were coming down the steps.

"When you're ready, then, Mr. Marston—it will be here in an hour. We'll wait."

"It" was, without doubt, the last resting-place devised for our bodies; the casket of oak, or elm, decorated and padded for the clay which appreciates attention no more.

Marston, his face set in the deep gloom which he considered suitable, let Sandy in. A dim twilight held the house, accompanied by the flutter and swish of let-down blinds.

"Very pleased you have arrived, sir—melancholy occasion—poor Mr. Hannyside spoke of you at the last—the very last, sir."

Sandy shivered; he was depressed and tired.

"Early lunch, sir—or merely whisky-and-Perrier?" asked Marston solemnly. "Mr. Allenbury is awaiting you, sir."

"Tea," said Phillips. "Same rooms, Mr. Marston? Tea is what Mr. Acland likes. I will take it up to him. Tea after his bath. No, sir. Bath, and tea first, sir. Mr. Allenbury afterwards, sir."

There was a whispered colloquy in the hall; an interchange of murmurs between the men.

"Being at the back of the house," said Phillips, "couldn't hurt to have a blind up. Asked for change of rooms, sir—melancholy things, shut blinds, sir."

When Phillips had regaled himself upon hot cocoa and cold beef in the servants' hall, he ministered to his tired master with tea and toast.

Sandy then came down to see the lawyer. He met upon the stairs Miss Mellicombe, draped in deepest black, and evidently nervously excited as to her heritage.

"Oh, Mr. Acland, there you are. You'll read the will in the morning, won't you? Don't think this cigarette heartless, my nerves are so upset. I've got a girl friend down to sleep in my room. I'm going to put a new window in St. Margareta's, Mr. Acland—gratitude, you know."

Miss Mellicombe had collected quite a large quantity of jet upon her mourning garb, which rattled and clicked as she moved. She was heavily scented with stephanotis, which she had wired for as the only thing she thought suitable, and she was faintly anxious about the diamonds. Hildebrand was to have the house, but, division had been promised, and there was a great deal to divide.

"I trust poor **uncle** has not been foolish about servants' legacies, Mr. Acland. They can always do for themselves; and it fritters so much good money. I'm just going to see

cook about the funeral lunch ; chickens are so dear—people must do with cold beef and ham, and pies.”

Sandy had said nothing then. Near them, close to the head of the stairs, was a closed door, and Sandy thought of his old friend, who lay in the room behind it. This girl gave no thought to him now, only to what he had left behind him.

“ I hope you’ll find the will to your liking,” said Sandy, gravely, as he went on. But he did not, in the least.

A thin, grey-haired man with a humorous mouth and a jumpy manner, waited for Sandy in the library. This was the family solicitor. He commented on the melancholy occasion ; trusted Mr. Acland was not tired ; very long journey ; but all this clearly without any interest ; and then, very jerkily and earnestly :

“ Have you got it ? Mr. Acland, I’m really anxious. It’s not anywhere here.”

“ Got what ? ” said Sandy blankly.

“ He didn’t give it you when you were here ? ” jerked the lawyer.

“ Good gracious ! His disease was not catching,” snapped Sandy irritably. “ No, I have not got it.”

“ The will, sir ; I mean the will, Mr. Acland,” cried Allenbury. “ Not the—er—complaint.”

Sandy shook his head and sat down.

“ He said it was in Paris put away in a secret drawer, or in Scotland. He was subject to lapses of memory, Mr. Acland. He used to hide things and forget them. The end came suddenly, just, in fact, as he was packed up and ready for Paris, that is not—er—for Paradise.” There was here an evident desire on Mr. Allenbury’s part to smile at his own play on words, a desire curbed sharply. “ Then came a fainting fit and no rally. ‘ In Paris,’ he said to me, ‘ after I’ve gone,’ Mr. Acland, ‘ or Scotland—Acland must look with you. And the letter,’ he said, ‘ letter give to Acland.’ Then he lost consciousness and did not speak again.”

Sandy, who was beginning to suffer from bewilderment, said he had got that, but described what it was and when it was to be opened.

"Then even that is U P," said Allenbury sadly. "You see, I drew up the will; it ought to be found *at once*. It's important for the stable, Mr. Acland."

Sandy looked up shrewdly. "For the stable?" he said. "Then there are some clauses."

"There are indeed a great many clauses," said Allenbury. "Good gracious! it's most important, even to me. There's a letter for you, Mr. Acland. He wrote it three days ago."

Sandy, opening it with a catch in his throat, read it with some dismay, for it called on him solemnly as friend and trustee, to go with Horace Allenbury to look for the mislaid will and not to abandon the search until it was found, "if I do not get it myself before the end," Hannyside wrote. "There's some fun in it, Alex." Sandy thought he could almost hear the old man's dry chuckle. "And if it wasn't found everything would be upset, and Red Fancy go to strangers. I must have the colours first some day—you'll see them."

"But—but," Sandy's face grew bleakly blank. It would mean staying away from Ireland—from Nora. "And the green drake," said Sandy bitterly, "will be gone."

Mr. Allenbury sympathised deeply, but so far as fowl went—duck fowls—there were a particularly fine breed of Aylesburys which, if they were not green, might suffice; several couples could be sent over.

"Man, the green drake is on Loch Corro," said Sandy, staring at the letter. "Millions of him. He will, I say, be gone."

Mr. Hildebrand Hannyside, in a mixed collection of suits, walked into the room. He wore a tail coat, allied to dark grey flannel trousers; a black evening tie, and a purple knitted waistcoat. He also carried with him the important manner of the new king, and he shook hands mournfully.

"As you've brought the will," he began, "most eccentric of my uncle entrusting it to you—as you've brought it——"

"But I have not," said Sandy coldly.

Mr. Allenbury said softly he feared that he and Mr. Acland must set forth to look for the will, and set forth on the morrow.

Hildebrand blew out his puffy cheeks, until reminder of the old game of "Butter and eggs to market" was produced. He looked crossly at the lawyer, and crossly at Sandy, and uncertainly at the room. He wanted certainty.

"It will no doubt be found at once," he said after a pause. "In the meantime, Allenbury, you could see to advertising those animals of Belial, for I will not," said young Mr. Hannyside sonorously, "be associated with the turf."

Mr. Allenbury replied hastily, but firmly. No selling or advertising must be dreamt of until the will was found. "I am under promise not to reveal its contents," said the lawyer, "but there must be no selling of the stud."

Hildebrand's plump cheeks took the tinge of imperial purple. If he wished the advertisement to be put in, it should be put in. Horses he would *not* have.

"Your uncle," said Sandy quietly, "may have left specified directions as to his favourites. We shall find this will in a few days."

As the argument reached this point, Araminta marched into the library, and stood black and jingling. The annoying state of affairs was broken to her by her stout first cousin, who eyed her suspiciously as he talked. The absence of a will would make Araminta share equally with him. Araminta was always poking at the writing-tables.

"It's felony to suppress it," said Hildebrand gloomily. "Felony, Araminta—remember that."

Araminta, jingling her jet, glared at him curiously. "Some people might have read of legacies they didn't like," she said heavily, as she sat down.

"Mr. Phillips, who had brought in some telegrams, bent to whisper to his master.

"Each of the heirs thinks as how the other stole it, sir," said Phillips softly. His hour in the house had sufficed to give him all particulars as to its difficulties.

"Phillips," said Sandy sharply. "Give me my telegrams, Phillips."

"Certainly, sir," said Phillips. "But principally for Hannyside, sir."

"The first thing to do," said Araminta, "is to search *here*. And I shall superintend it, Mr. Allenbury. My uncle's keys are on the table."

Mr. Allenbury replied testily that the keys, before coming to rest upon the table, had been in every lock they fitted in the room. "The will is not here," said Allenbury. "It's not in this room."

"Nevertheless, we shall search," Hildebrand agreed with his cousin, and they had to be obeyed.

So, for a dusty, weary hour, drawers were opened; files of papers gone through, safes ransacked, bureaux tapped for secret receptacles. Araminta took sundry dives into the furniture, probing down into the sides of the leather-covered chairs. Hildebrand commenced the task of lifting out the books, and abandoned it languidly.

"Satisfied," said Mr. Allenbury, "it is not here? Goodness! My lamented client having said Paris—or Scotland—why not Paris or Scotland?"

"Miss Knox has arrived," said Marston solemnly. "She is in the drawing-room."

Araminta, removing a large streak of dust from the back of her hand by impounding it on her nose, wished to know why Mollie Knox should thus thrust herself forward.

"Wired for by me, as a legatee," said Allenbury; and again had too apparent difficulty in repressing a smile, this time at his rhyme.

Araminta, when all search was abandoned, stalked

irritably about the room. She directed that Miss Knox should have a room on the upper story at the back, and she ordered the hastening of lunch.

Here Hildebrand, storming to the door, said that he had ordered lunch at two, as the hour which he preferred a mid-day meal, and looked at Marston with authority. Marston went out quickly.

"At one," said Araminta.

"At two," boomed Hildebrand. "And cold supper at eight. No one can wish for dinner in this house of mourning. At two," said Hildebrand, capturing Phillips, who was crossing the dim old hall. "Tell the cook from me."

Phillips said "Certainly, sir," in his most urbane manner, and went on upstairs. He returned swiftly, encountering the dusty party as they stood in the hall, waiting for a last safe to be locked up. Allenbury had forgotten the word on the letter lock, and was twisting the letters gloomily. Hildebrand and Araminta would not leave him until everything was secure.

"It's 'Folly,' sir," said Phillips politely.

Mr. Allenbury jerked up an outraged and dust-grimed face, to gaze wrathfully in the direction of the voice. Hildebrand remarked, in what he may have intended to be a whisper, that Mr. Acland ought really to get rid of his man.

"Just 'Folly,' sir—the word, that is, sir," said Phillips politely. "Saw Mr. Hannyside doing it when I was here last, sir."

The solicitor, his temper worn thin from over-much searching, gulped down something, smiled jerkily, and swung the letters obediently, the lock clicking to.

"It was always Folly," he said thoughtfully.

Phillips vanished, bearing irate messages, through the swing door leading to the kitchen regions, to return almost immediately.

"The cook directs me sir and madam, to say that

luncheon will be ready at one-thirty," he said to the irate cousins, and again vanished.

"The cook," said Araminta, "shall leave in a month!"

"That, I fancy, is for me to decide," snorted Hildebrand.

Sandy sighed audibly; having taken no part in the search, he was at least clean. He went quietly up the shallow stairs and down to his old friend's room. Here, still in his last sleep, cold, a smile on the white lips, lay the dead master of the house—a man who had slaved his life away to amass wealth, and was leaving it all to two people who did not waste one thought of regret upon him.

"If he could only tell us," said Sandy sadly. "Never mind, Reggie. I'm sorry, and I'll do my best for you, old man."

A shaft of sunlight quivered through the thick blinds, falling on the quiet form. The one thing he craved for, to see his horse win a National, had been denied him. He had spun his web until it was thick with golden flies, and what did it avail him now.

"He might be fit to ride a hunt still, if he'd only given it up in time." Sandy turned away sadly, to go, when the door opened.

Some one, weeping audibly, stole into the room.

"He was my only friend," whispered little Mollie Knox.

"And, oh, Mr. Acland, no one is sorry."

"We are," said Sandy gently, taking her away.

He was vexed by a sudden thought. If the finding of the will was delayed, Mollie Knox might suffer.

"He allowed you something, didn't he?"

"As much as I would take," she said, "every week. He said he would leave me out of reach of poverty. I could not live on what I earn, Mr. Acland."

Marston boomed the gong softly. They came to the luncheon, partaken of in semi-darkness, and highly seasoned by Araminta and Hildebrand, as they carped at each other across the table.

Hildebrand, having taken the head of the table, Araminta insisted on the foot, where she sat, removed by a wide expanse from every one.

During the dreary afternoon, various relatives began to arrive from the station, filling the house with the pad of soft footsteps, and the echo of decorously lowered voices.

Towards tea-time the subject of the lost will was in full discussion, every one who hoped for a legacy having a theory to advance. Fresh searches were instituted, in all kinds of impossible places. Colonel Phillips, who had hoped to be left one of the brood mares, turned out a cabinet in the drawing-room; his accident with a Staffordshire figure causing a serious breach between him and Mr. Hannyside Garlande, who had been promised some of the china.

Hildebrand wore the importance of the host upon his fat face, and Araminta played hostess almost aggressively.

"We could," said Allenbury, retreating to the library with Sandy—"we could start to-morrow afternoon, and catch the boat train to-morrow night. It must be in the Villa Regny."

Sandy sighed drearily. He sat down to write telegrams, counting the words carefully. He must let Nora know at once.

Alленbury went out to get the evening post, and a faint peace was upon Sandy, when the lawyer returned at a jerky trot, bursting with news of an unpleasant nature.

"She—er—they," gasped Allenbury, flopping into a chair. "Here's a nice to-do!"

"They—who—what? Thirteen, fourteen—I can't keep it to twelve," said Sandy irritably.

"They—Miss Mellicombe—Hildebrand—they're *coming too*."

"*They're* what?" said Sandy, who had rung the bell. "What? Send my man here," he said to the footman.

Mr. Allenbury related, in gasps, how he had met the cousins in the hall. How Araminta had told him firmly, and with some insolence, that when he went to Paris, she was coming too; she would see that will when it was found. How Hildebrand had immediately broken in with the remark that if Araminta went, he went, because one never knew how things might be pulled about, and that he wished the Scotch Lodge to be searched first.

"They won't let each other out of their sight. They believe—that—I—I—might not play fair," jerked Allenbury almost hysterically. "I am insulted—my professional prestige——"

"A little brandy and Apollinaris, sir," said Phillips, at his elbow; "very good for strained nerves, sir."

Mr. Allenbury swore ungratefully, but did not argue the point.

"They are both coming," he said. "Wherever we go. Bother! They will fight all the time, and when they know—Thank you, Phillips—his name is Phillips, is it not?"

Sandy Acland gripped the arms of his chair tightly, muttering: "Araminta—Hildebrand. Hildebrand—Araminta."

"Phillips!" he shot out. "Phillips!"

Phillips said "Yes, sir," a little anxiously. Sandy's lips were growing blue.

"Send these wires, Phillips," said Sandy.

Mr. Phillips coughed.

"If Mrs. Acland could come across, sir," he began.

The light of an undreamed of joy illumined Sandy's face. He tore the forms across.

"She shall come," he said. "She shall. If I am to have Araminta and Hildebrand, I will have some one to protect me. Here, take these instead, Phillips—quickly! Send the boy with them—it's only four o'clock now."

Phillips gathered up the forms—the words had not been counted.

"I do hope he is not a-goin' to be ill," said Phillips, as he left.

Sandy came to dinner full of determination. Nora would probably leave immediately, catching the train in the evening. She would be at Northlap next day.

He met Araminta and Hildebrand cheerfully as they requested private conversation in the library after dinner.

They wished to come to look for the will. It was their right—they insisted on it.

"So when we start for Scotland," said Hildebrand.

"Paris," jerked in Araminta.

Sandy gazed at them patiently, recited in what he may have meant for a tuneful voice something about one taking the high road and one the low road, and—but the end of the verse was cut off by Araminta's stern declaration as to the heartlessness of singing in the house of the dead.

"If it had even been a hymn," said Hildebrand severely.

Sandy said something weakly which sounded like the reaping by-and-by.

He then observed gravely that if Miss Mellicombe and Mr. Hannyside wished to superintend the movements of trustee and solicitor, they must do so, but he really thought if one took the high road and one—that was, if one went to Paris and one went to Loch Lomond——

"Glenicurrie," corrected Allenbury.

"It would do just as well," finished Sandy.

They would go together; they would see the will found together.

Sandy sighed softly. Perhaps, then, as Loch Lomond—Glenicurrie—had better be searched first—and they would go to Paris.

"And the green drake," said Sandy wearily, "will be certainly gone when it's over."

Morning brought the sadness of a funeral—the pomp of our last drive on earth—the pacing of the sleek black horses, and the forced gravity of those who do not care as

they follow us—who forget that, as the dead in its coach has passed, so they too must pass, and that even then grim death may choose them for the next in the never-filled ranks of his army.

It was over at last. This, our brother here departed, would never fret or weary again; would never have the right to breathe the fresh air, to look at the soft, blue sky, and the glory of early summer upon the world.

Dead—passed from the little piece we pass along, and who could say where the spirit kept watch?

The blinds clicked upwards to let in the light of day; voices were raised over the luncheon for the mourners. It was over. Better, since it is an everyday occurrence, to clear the memory away.

One man sorrowed for his master. Watson, stiff and dignified, had a choke in his voice as he came up after luncheon to ask if any one would come down to see the horses.

The request brought Hildebrand on to the saddle of his horse, which was of the genus hobby, without delay.

He said, emphatically, that the stable *must* be advertised for sale at once; that he would not be associated with gambling and the turf. "I therefore direct," said Hildebrand, to the somewhat absorbed profile of Mr. Allenbury, "I therefore direct——"

"We will go," said the lawyer, "to the stables. I want to see Rubicon's foal, Watson."

"I therefore direct," boomed Hildebrand.

"The stables," said Allenbury, turning, "shall not be interfered with until the will is found. Afterwards its fate will lie in your hands—more or less—that is, more or—ahem!—less."

And he left Hildebrand in angry rumination.

"A great crowd of old horses eating oats and wasting money," snapped Araminta. "Surely they can be done away with and sold to cabs."

"Valuable brood mares, madam," said Watson stiffly,

"do not go as cabbers. Rubicon and Berdiner have both foals, and——"

Araminta looked as if she considered the discussion indelicate; she said every horse could not be a brood mare, and she stared at Mr. Allenbury almost viciously. "You know, and there is something you will not tell," she said, irritably.

Hildebrand wished to know if he understood that he—Hildebrand—was to have his wishes brushed aside, and then the affairs of Belial were to eat corn provided with his money, for he considered it almost impertinent.

With a very red face, Mr. Allenbury got up and remarked that, for all Mr. Hannyside knew, the money might be left to Watson.

"Nothing could or should be done until the will was found, and——"

"Mrs. Acland," said Marston smoothly.

"I could not come before," said Nora, "because I didn't want to tumble over the funeral. So I had a bath and a rest in London, and here I am."

Nora was garbed in dark grey; she led Mickey, her terrier, by a chain, and Delia, her own maid, stood at the door, looking bewildered and slightly distressed.

"We did not know," said Araminta, unhinging herself from her chair, "that your wife was coming, Mr. Acland."

"His wife," said Nora, eyeing the large young lady critically. "His little trip to Paris with you is crushed, Miss ——"

"Araminta," said Sandy happily. "Mellicombe—that is."

Miss Mellicombe, with heightened colour, immediately involved herself in a toilsome web of explanation. It concerned the real reason of her desire for travel. Her sense of duty, as regarded the will, her deep distress at being the cause of confounded jealousy.

Nora kissed Sandy; she appeared at first to have forgotten him, and said it was the Irish temperament.

"Having seen you," began Nora, with a twinkle in her grey eyes.

"Don't say you feel you may safely go back," whispered Sandy softly, "don't, Nora."

Mickey, weary from his journey, found a cushion, and prepared for slumber. He was disturbed in his fifth wheel and scrape by a shriek from Miss Mellicombe.

"The dog!" she said, "on the cushion."

"He likes soft ones," said Nora equably. "He picks them out at home. Don't scrape through to the feathers, Mickey, not here!"

Mickey completed his last circle and lay down. Miss Mellicombe said, snappily, that the proper places for dogs were kennels—and eyed the cushion unhappily. The furniture of the drawing-room might yet be hers.

"Goodness! if we were all in our proper places," said Nora, "half my life would have been spent in the poor-house—Sandy's as a teller in a bank. Sandy, the roan mare broke loose yesterday."

"Oh!" said Sandy eagerly.

"She rolled on the new bed of carnations in the front," said Nora. "They were splinters when I left. Con said they'd be the 'grandest cuttin's intirely,' and I left him planting them."

"A horse—loose in the pleasure gardens," said Araminta faintly.

"The dear! she jumped the wooden gate," said Nora, "—must have! It's that Timsy Blake, Sandy, who thinks stable doors are meant to be left open. And oh! Sandy, Kathleen killed a three-pounder—a nice fish! And—old James O'Neill was shot coming home from Knockdrew fair."

"Shot—dead!" said Hildebrand. "Good—er—Heavens! What a country."

"Oh, no, they missed him," said Nora, "but they hit his pigs, before they were fit for it, either."

Hildebrand, getting slowly to his feet, inquired, with

bulging eyes, if Mrs. Acland really intended to imply that it mattered to a pig when it suffered death. If she implied that it was not fit—fit—in the sense——?

"Oh, good gracious! when it wasn't prepared at all," said Nora. "Don't you keep pigs here?"

"We do—as pigs," said Hildebrand gravely. "I should like to say a few words——"

"Well, we do—as bacon," said Mrs. Acland briskly. "How could the beast be fit before it was fattened? He was carting them home. What about horses? I want to see them if you're going?"

Hildebrand sat down.

Delia had remained outside the door, but her loneliness was cheered by Watson, who had also left the room to wait.

Watson was cast down, and inclined for sympathy. He recounted his sorrows to a sleepy but kindly listener.

"Praises be!—to be wantin' to do away with the horses," said Delia. "An' they such gran' breedy ones, more-be-token."

An invitation to inspect the stud had just been given when Allenbury, Sandy, and Nora came out. Miss Mellicombe had produced a book, over which she said she must meditate, and Hildebrand would not leave her to find the will in his absence.

"In any case," he said, "he did not wish to see horses, especially racehorses."

"Why do those two hate the racing stable?" said Nora, when she had worshipped the stud.

"When they see the old master's will there may be a surprise on them," said Watson gloomily. "Last words he said to me three days ago were: 'Watson, the colours must come home in front—must, Watson!—even if I'm not here to see 'em do it.'"

CHAPTER IV

Nothing goes right. We would and we would not.

—*Measure for Measure.*

"SANDY," said Mrs. Acland, in a voice lacking its usual gaiety, "Sandy."

Mr. Acland walked to the door of his dressing-room, to answer "Yes," dolorously.

"Do . . . they always fight, Sandy?" said Nora. "Always?"

"Generally," said Sandy gloomily. "No, Phillips, I will not take the tall hat to Scotland."

Phillips murmured decorous advice as to leaving it behind for ever.

"And you will send it to be blocked, Phillips," said Sandy Acland acridly, "and renovated."

"Would have cheered poor Mr. Hannyside up if he could have seen it, sir," said Phillips, respectfully. "Memory of sport behind him, sir"; he took the tall hat away.

"It's their religious differences, Nora," said Sandy sadly, "so you see. One owns a High Church curate, or she would if he'd marry her, and the other cannot admit the possibility of starch in heaven—that is white vestments," said Mr. Acland hurriedly, "or a cross."

Nora said firmly that "A cross could never be missing where Hildebrand existed, even in the spirit."

"It's my belief," she went on, "that the old man has played some last practical joke upon them, and that they'll find it out."

The Aclands went down to breakfast in a subdued humour. Mickey, the terrier, trotting behind them. Delia,

who found England "cruel grand in itself," followed Phillips to the kitchen regions, observing nervously as she went that she'd rather face Father Pat, an' he vexed, than all the strangers.

As it was Friday, Araminta was satisfying a healthy appetite with dry toast and boiled eggs. Hildebrand took cold roast beef, not because he liked it, but to show the path to glory did not lie over such foolish abstinence.

Mr. Allenbury was seated between the two, looking flushed and annoyed. At eight-thirty man finds it trying to be referred to to settle endless disputes.

His conversation ran irritably.

"I really cannot say if the will will be found in Scotland, Miss Mellicombe. Do I think it unlikely, as it is certain to be in Paris? I am not certain of anything. Do I think you could immediately take down the pictures you think godless in the house here, Mr. Hannyside? I say certainly not—until you are sure of your position. Why will I not tell you distinctly who Northlap Priory belongs to? Because I am bound by a promise of secrecy, and if the will is not found it will be disposed of. Oh, good morning," said Mr. Allenbury almost eagerly, seeing Sandy and his wife.

"We have not much time before the train goes," said Araminta, looking at the clock. "You are late."

"Very little indeed," chimed in Hildebrand; "you are very late."

Nora observed cheerily that heaps of trains went to Scotland, and sat down without any air of haste.

"Better to miss a train than have indigestion," said Mrs. Acland. "Worst thing you ever did to hunt a horse too soon after his feed."

Araminta grew peevish at the sound of the word horse.

"Useless animals—eating," she sniffed crossly, "eating my—our—money. Old beasts——"

"Darlings," said Nora pleasantly. "If you hunted, Miss Mellicombe, you'd know. I never kill one at home until they cannot enjoy their lives any more."

"When there is real distress in the world——" began Hildebrand pompously. "It seems to me that useless four-footed animals—oh—ah!" cried Hildebrand.

Nora, looking placidly at her terrier, said the dog often did that. He thought it was clever.

For Hildebrand, to mark his point, had waved a fork impaled in cold beef, and Mickey, mounted on a chair close behind, had skilfully bitten the meat off.

Marston announced the arrival of the motors, and the probability of missing the train. Miss Hannyside's maid and Delia had already left in the bus; Phillips, regretting the inability of the vehicle to hold further passengers, waited urbanely for the motors.

A long journey is at all times trying; when it is undertaken with two people racked by anxiety and bad temper, it becomes positively painful. Araminta and Hildebrand never agreed save as to horses and racing. Every four-legged animal drawing trap or cart upon the roads they passed made them look sourly thoughtful.

To begin with, owing to Nora's lack of punctuality, followed by the last difficulty of removing Mickey from his hold upon a peacock's tail, they missed the fast train from Norton, and the express at Euston.

The choice of waiting until afternoon, or travelling by a train of leisurely habits, being laid before them, they chose to go on.

The tension was telling on Hildebrand—he was hot and irritable, with his round eyes bulging jumpily. He was so absorbed that when a mumbled request for *The Sunday Times* resulted in his receiving the *Pink 'Un*, he took the flaring paper without noticing what he carried. Struggling ill-humouredly through the crowd, Hildebrand encountered Mr. Grimes and Mr. Jones, two elders of Greater Bethel, who fixed pained eyes upon the paper as the youth rushed to greet them. They were his greatest friends.

Hildebrand flung out his woes and fears, to be checked by Mr. Grimes's look of displeasure and inquiry, "if it was

now necessary to buy this journal? No doubt it contains a reference to your lamented uncle," said Mr. Grimes, pausing when they came to Hildebrand's train.

Mr. Allenbury trod upon a porter's toe as Hildebrand, looking up at the station roof instead of his purchase, replied that his uncle was never likely to be mentioned in so fine a paper. "One that I love," said Hildebrand emphatically.

Mr. Jones, who exuded holiness, sniffed laboriously.

Mr. Grimes observed coldly that he had not been aware of Hildebrand's liking for such literature. It was news to Lesser Cheriton. And his eyes twinkled softly.

"But, you yourself," said Hildebrand. "You take it."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Grimes, with hasty wrath.

"For years," went on Hildebrand, bewildered, "I have read it on the Sabbath morn. Oh, must you go? Yes, for years, and I've seen it on your table I could swear——"

The elders melted away, and Hildebrand looked down.

"You can give it to Sandy," said Nora gently; "he loves it."

Hildebrand knocked against several unoffending passengers as he raved to and fro. He declined to apologize for the demolition of a parrot's cage, and he wailed to the roof for justice.

"Wh—what will they think—what will they say? I must find them—follow them—miss the train. Madam, I cannot help your poll parrot. I must clear myself . . ."

The first smile which Araminta had compassed for the day spread hopefully across her large face.

"You really ought to," she said sweetly.

Hildebrand wavered in short rushes, gave one look at Araminta, and finally darted into the carriage.

"I must endure contumely," said Hildebrand, rolling his eyes.

He leant from the window as the train started, and catching sight of his friends, failed to improve his character, for flurried and distraught, he emphasized

his shrieked-out explanation by waving the *Pink 'Un* emphatically.

The elders turned their backs in marked displeasure, cooling their hurt eyes by studying an advertisement of Black-and-White Whisky.

Hildebrand, realising his last mistake, sat down heavily, to pour out anguished confidences concerning Miss Susannah Grimes.

"His daughter," groaned poor Hildebrand, "wrapped in sanctity—eats galantine on Sunday mornings to save the cook frying bacon, and now she will hear—she will hear—of this——"

Misery passed on to meet peevish ill-humour. When Araminta, who had forgotten Friday, began her luncheon, Hildebrand's reminder reft a portion of chicken from her very lips.

"Breakfast nonsense forgotten?" snarled Hildebrand viciously, watching his cousin's subsequent chastened luncheon on a bun and bread, with marked pleasure.

The fast train would have had a restaurant car. On this Araminta fasted and endured. Chocolate and butter-scotch upset her digestion; cold eggs, fetched by her maid, made her bilious.

The journey dragged on, and it was night when they were decanted at a wayside station, to look out along a perfectly kept road and see nothing to meet them.

"It wass the way, the vehicle wass here for the six," said the station-master, "an' there be no telegraph. They went back. It is seven miles to the lodge."

Every one looked blankly at every one else. No one had sent a wire. They were seven miles from food and shelter.

"It is the way—Tummus Macpherson has a vehicle," said the station-master kindly. "An' his house is not so far for a call. It will be better than to sit upon the bit trunks for the nicht."

A telegram could not be dispatched; the office was closed.

Phillips went to the house of Mr. Tummus Macpherson, to return after a weary half hour with a fiery-headed and irascible giant who drove a species of tray upon wheels, attached to a shaggy Scotch pony. For this, it appeared, he asked the sum of one golden pound for the drive.

"The leddies can sit up, and the lassies," he said, "and that with meself will be enough. She do stop at a beeg heel," added Tummus gloomily, "there bein' no large heart in her."

There was certainly not much large body.

Mr. Macpherson, who at intervals could be heard lamenting guid porridge and scones in an undertone—he had been reft from his supper—assisted Araminta to a seat on a board; her maid, pouting sulkily, was directed to sit on the floor on a sack.

"The other leddie the noo," said Tummus, "for it will be the late road for me."

Hildebrand Hannyside's complexion had been gradually assuming a green tinge. Araminta starting first, even in a tray on wheels. Araminta free for perhaps thirty precious minutes to probe into drawers and cupboards, and find documents. Careless men added codicils to their wills, and left those codicils loose.

A gurgle of positive anguish came from Hildebrand's pale lips. He looked wildly at the dusty, desolate night—he cried that he must drive.

"Hildebrand's ill," said Sandy, hearing the gurgle.

Hildebrand fixed his bulging eyes longingly upon the tray.

"This gentleman is ill," said Sandy to Tummus. "You must pack him in."

"A walk weel joost do him guid," growled Tummus. "It ees the train upon his stumack."

Nora thought that might certainly prove upsetting. She shook her head resolutely towards the portion of board left vacant for her to sit on, and announced that she meant to walk.

"I should only get off every minute to rest that poor rat," she said, "and I weigh nine stone. You can have it all to yourself, Miss Mellicombe."

Hildebrand Hannyside corrected this announcement, as, with a frantic and joyous plea of illness, he absolutely swamped into the pony cart and sat beside Araminta, a flush of triumph replacing his pallor. Now, at least, they would arrive together.

"But, Mr. Allenbury?" began Sandy.

Allenbury said firmly that he would also walk.

The luggage was piled upon the platform, and the pony cart started. Phillips was nowhere to be seen. He had waited to watch the packing of the tray, and then disappeared into the night.

The shaggy pony clattered off at a jerky canter. Sandy, Nora, and Allenbury tramped away along the dusty road.

Seven miles. . . . Seven miles, when night has fallen, is a long and weary walk.

Nora faced it bravely; when she had raced for a mile, she flagged visibly, and wanted to know if they were half way.

Mr. Allenbury said he thought so, tactfully; the next rise, he said, would bring them into view of Glenicurrie, that was, if Glenicurrie could be seen. He omitted the fact that five long miles lay between them and the trees, which, on a clear day, could be seen from the top of the hill.

Nora, setting her thinly shod feet down stubbornly, said it was not a rise, but a mountain, and as one could not see in the dark, it was no use the house being so near. They were plodding up the long, smooth steep when the hoot of a motor sounded in the distance.

"I wonder," said Sandy, "why Phillips stayed behind! It is not like Phillips," he said thoughtfully.

A Ducellier light brought its silvery eye over the crest of the hill. It came swiftly at them, blinding them with its

radiance, picked their dodging bodies out of the dimness, and then grew stationary, embracing them in its gleam.

"I hoped, sir, you would be about here," said Phillips, getting nimbly out of the car—a big tourer, with a long-nosed bonnet, which spoke of power.

"Phillips!" said Nora. "How? Why?"

"The station-master, madam," said Phillips, "obliging and kindly, spoke of Sir Mark Dalgill two miles away and of his motor car. Borrowed the station-master's bicycle, madam, unfortunately rather short for me, and—ahem—scorched to Rathpeffer, explaining our unfortunate dilemma to Sir Mark, who kindly lent his Napier immediately to take us to Glenicurrie, sir," said Phillips to his master.

"Phillips," said Sandy, in accents of pure rapture, "you are a wonder."

"Certainly, sir," said Phillips, opening the door.

It was bliss after the weary tramp, the tramp which must have lasted so long, to pack into the big car, and hear the purr of the powerful engine when she had turned to breast the hill. Scotland became a friendly place now in the darkness; a dim land of heather and faintly running burns.

They swooped down a steep slope and down into a valley between two hills, humming forward carefully, but at twenty miles an hour instead of two.

"We shall pick up Araminta; how glad she will be," said Nora, snuggling down into the light coat which Phillips's thought had provided for her.

"And Hildebrand," said Mr. Allenbury, "Hildebrand must be put upon the step, or he will suffer torture."

Sandy said that overloading was a matter for Sir Mark's chauffeur to consider. But as they flew along, the headlight picked no two-wheeled tray drawn by a sulky pony out of the night.

They paused at narrow iron gates, and swung into a

gravelled sweep, a low, dim house standing dark and quiet behind it.

"Oh, they must have simply killed that poor pony," said Nora sorrowfully. "We never caught them up."

A square of light flashed from the door into the gloom; other lights seemed to spring into being. The caretaker expressed vivid surprise in broad and somewhat unintelligible Scotch.

"He had indeed given them up. He was verra sorry for sure. An' the leddy left in the night. Gudeness gracious, but what must they be thinkin'; an' what providence had sent the car?"

"It was not providence—it was Phillips," said Nora, as she got out. Further, she asked why Miss Mellicombe and Mr. Hannyside had not given warning of their fellow-travellers' arrival.

The caretaker, whose name of course was Sandy, observed with surprise that no one—not even a sperrit—had come to warn him.

"Then they have fallen down a cliff," said Sandy breathlessly. "There's been an accident!"

Phillips carefully removed the borrowed coats.

"The road we came upon, sir," he explained, "was possibly not the road traversed by the market cart. It was slightly longer, but more suitable for a motor. Having consulted Sir Mark's chauffeur, we decided to take it, sir."

Sandy looked at his man, and said nothing, extremely eloquently. It did not take a wizard to remember the fact that, if they had overtaken the toiling pony, Phillips would have had to transfer himself into the market cart.

"They will probably be some little time as yet," said Phillips gravely. "Impossible to be too careful as to roads when driving at night in a motor, sir."

Sandy McClasky's wife hurriedly dished up supper. There were two excellent trout, grilled with great skill,

and cold chicken and ham, and cream-cheese; home-made bread of several varieties, and honey and marmalade.

Hunger made waiting impossible. Reserving one chicken for the other travellers, they went into a cosy sitting-room, where a peat and wood fire glowed in a low grate. Reginald Hannyside had spent every August, and sometimes September, in the lodge. It was comfortable, with the plain comfort which man delights in after a long day's fishing. One turned from one's dinner to the fire to doze in deep arm-chairs.

The stage of tobacco had been reached when the scrunch of wheels outside, and the sound of raised voices, brought the three to the window. Sandy put the lamp out so that they were not easily seen.

Hildebrand and Araminta could be heard quarrelling bitterly as they drove to the door.

"I tell you I will not allow it."

"You are not at all sure how far your authority will go."

Then silence, and; "I suppose we shall have to rout some one up to meet the Aclands"—this in more amicable tones.

"Yes," said Sandy softly.

"It seems rather hard on a man. If we sent this back a little way," said Araminta, in what she believed to be a whisper—the cart was waiting at the swing gate, and Macpherson was down—"they would have to pay half."

Hildebrand thought it would be a good idea.

The yellow light gleamed from the hall door, and Phillips paced forth to meet the travellers.

"You!" said Araminta, gasping—"you! Where are—is—are—Mr. Acland?"

Sandy McAllister's Scotch voice explained swiftly. "The ithers had been at the lodge for half an hour or mair from oot the motor, an' were cosy an' warm in the rum."

"Came—in a motor!" Araminta's shrill voice rose swiftly. "They have been here for hours!" She sat on her wooden seat and raised her hands tragically. "A conspiracy," she spat forth viciously. "That Allenbury creature wanted to get here first to find the will and tamper with it. It is a plot."

Mr. Allenbury, his complexion of a fine scarlet hue, wished to know in a strangled whisper if that was not sufficient grounds for an action for libel.

Sandy said he feared not—certainly as the cousins' lawyer.

"If it was the last penny—if they were the last clients Allenbury & Allenbury ever owned, I would not keep them on," blazed the irate lawyer stormily.

"And that Acland," boomed Hildebrand. "*What* have they been doing all this time?"

"Partaking of supper, sir." Phillips advanced softly to the side of the trap. "Fortunate enough to borrow a motor, sir. Allow me, madam—these carts being difficult of access. Charming drive, madam."

Araminta, unclamping herself stiffly, wished to know why she had not been overtaken and rescued.

"Road you took too hilly for motor-driving, madam," said Phillips urbanely. "Impossible to be too careful in the dark, madam, especially with borrowed cars. No doubt your route far more picturesque, madam."

"Picturesque!" said Miss Mellicombe, bitterly stalking into the house, and directing that her luggage should be fetched immediately.

But Sandy McClasky was completely obdurate on this subject. If it were for a Creestian boddy he would send forth Jan, the lad, but the bit goods must be waitin' till the morrow.

Phillips took Nora's bag and Sandy's suit-case from where he had concealed them under Macpherson's feet, and went on calmly.

Araminta's voice could be heard raging outside.

"Good heavens—the pipes!" Sandy looked at the cloud of tobacco. "We'd forgotten."

Hasty concealment did not relieve the atmosphere of a pungent odour, even with the windows flung wider.

Mrs. McClasky hurriedly rearranged the supper table, so that the second chicken showed in his untouched freshness, flanked by salad, cream-cheese, and the variety of cakes and bread.

Araminta, in bitter mood, and announcing a weariness which was unbearable, stalked into the room. She was followed hurriedly by Hildebrand.

The blight of Friday fell once more upon hunger. Fish—yes, there had been fish; but unfortunately Phillips, who believed it would not keep hot, had shared the one left over with Delia.

"Being myself accustomed to fish upon Fridays," apologized Phillips, "wife a Catholic, madam."

Miss Mellicombe took cream-cheese almost savagely, as Hildebrand explained the merits of the home-cured ham.

Presently, Hildebrand, wrinkling his nose, believed the windows had never been opened since Mr. Hannyside's last visit, for the place reeked of smoke.

"Astonishing the way it clings," said Sandy, touching something warm in his coat pocket.

Hildebrand did not smoke. He considered it immoral. His face of chaste displeasure when Araminta lighted her cigarettes, which she smoked hurriedly and without real enjoyment, was always a study.

It was too late to commence search that night.

Araminta solemnly locked the door of the sitting-room and tiny gun-room beyond it, and handed the keys to Sandy. It was her gentle way of showing her lack of trust in her late uncle's legal adviser. He acknowledged the act with a grim smile.

It was difficult to feel depressed at Glenicurrie in the morning. Reginald Hannyside had made a hobby of the place; a rock garden, so beautifully kept that its wildness

was completely preserved, humped its beauties below the windows. Late rhododendrons, azaleas, white pinks, countless brilliant little rock flowers, crouched in nooks and trailed over crannies. The grey-brown waters of the lake lapped close by, and an active river, tuned to hoarse murmurs by recent rains, danced gaily into it. The fresh Highland air blew sweet and clean across hill and lake, the kiss of health in its breath.

Lake and river were of the best in Scotland, teeming with big brown trout, with salmon in the river. Later the white trout fishing was excellent in the lower lake and stretch of the river.

When Sandy woke to the soothing gurgle of the waters, the spirit raised years ago at Dooloch Lake rose in him.

Phillips, roused from slumber, produced tea. Sandy McClasky was only too willing to scurry for rods and tackle.

It was of course unpardonable of Mr. Acland, out on so grave a mission, to return with his wife at eleven o'clock with a goodly basket of trout and a small salmon.

Mrs. McClasky went smilingly to cook eggs and bacon and to take five varieties of hot bread from the nook she kept them hot in; but the faces of Araminta and Hildebrand were stony with displeasure.

It is even possible that Mr. Acland would have been an hour later had not Allenbury appeared, waving wildly, on the shores.

"Since eight," said Allenbury jerkily, discreetly mixing a smile and a sigh, "they have been fuming. I think," he said mildly, "that they are hungry."

"But good gracious," said Sandy, "why wait breakfast?"

Mr. Allenbury observed still more mildly that Sandy seemed to forget that he had the key of both sitting-rooms in his pocket.

At this Nora made further delay by sitting down to laugh helplessly.

"And he hasn't," said Mrs. Acland, wiping her eyes, "for he threw them into the little drawer in the hall table before he went to bed last night. We've had tea and cold scones, but, oh, Araminta."

"Fish, madam," said Phillips, who had come to row an oar, "will console Miss Mellicombe."

"I suggested the windows," said Allenbury, "but they are some way from the ground, and small. Also Araminta would not allow Hildebrand to get in first, and Hildebrand would not allow Araminta, and so they waited. I took breakfast in the kitchen," he added.

Sandy tried not to look like an elderly and naughty child as he met the charges laid upon him by fate.

"It was all for fish, too, for *your* breakfast," he said to Araminta; "I thought you could not do without fish."

To which Miss Mellicombe shot forth, gratefully, that she detested fish, and Hildebrand remarked gloomily that for his part it always reminded him of Rome.

Mrs. McClasky counselled more breakfasts in the kitchen. "The rum not bein' red up or dusted the noo," she said, eyeing her younger guests with candid dislike; "though I put the steps to the window the leddy wudna let me in," she added acidly.

When Araminta, irritable from hunger, asked for the keys, Sandy's journey to the hall table bore an air of guilt.

"There!" said Araminta, looking at Allenbury, "for any dishonest person to take out—there; oh, Mr. Acland——"

Mr. Allenbury breathed heavily. "There is not a judge," he said to the ceiling, "who would not give it in my favour."

Phillips, waiting with a duster, looked respectfully solicitous.

"Exceedingly flushed, sir," he said sympathetically. "Not well, sir? If I might suggest a little soda water, sir."

"A little verdict," said Allenbury bitterly, as he watched Araminta unlock the door.

A further wait was necessary while turf ashes were lifted and powdery dust removed. And then a breakfast such as Scotland can produce smoked on the table. Oat cakes, scones, griddle bread, soda cakes, yeast rolls, Highland mutton ham, and honey and trout and eggs.

Sandy thought contentedly that he wished the search might take a day or two; the memory of his big trout's fight for life was hot in him.

"Took out every yard of line," he prattled to Allenbury. "Jumped six times, and tried to break me. Oh, fighting fish, fighting fish—and Nora got a salmon—six pounds; but Nora is an artist and I'm not," he said humbly.

At this speech, Mrs. Acland's glance across the table said plainly that whatever he was she was satisfied with him.

Highly mollified by a third egg, and the absent-minded eating of trout, Araminta grew better humoured, and Hildebrand lost gloom.

The search in that little house could not be a long one. There were no papers in the one bureau save a few old letters, and the fishing and shooting book. The will had certainly not been left in Scotland.

Sandy brought in and questioned as to packets of papers, shook his head.

"The maister had no mind at all for the letters," he said. "Times he'd tear them to weeshy bits, and throw them to the burn."

Araminta, with a squeal of anguish, caught Mr. Allenbury by the arm.

"If he burnt it—what then?" she shrieked. "Who would get—there are crowds of relatives?"

"Burn is a river," said Allenbury, dislodging the young lady firmly. "It is Gaelic for a river, Miss Mellicombe."

Miss Mellicombe relaxed stiffly, and with a marked aspect of suspicion.

"No mind had he for the papers," went on Sandy. "It wass for the sport he wass here."

Clearly the will was not at Glenicurrie.

"Sandy," said Hildebrand, after a pause, and over his shoulder.

"Yes," said Acland absently.

"Sandy, get a trap," said Hildebrand, "and take some telegrams to the station."

"I shall do no such thing," said Mr. Acland testily, "no such thing, Hannyside."

Hildebrand spun round and apologized. Sandy McClasky, grinning faintly to the door, whispered to Acland of the "verra best pool in the river for feesh—a mile down or mair—an' in fine order the day."

"Having done with the rootin'," said Sandy, "ye might be for the sport."

Sandy Acland thought they might. He stood considering as Hildebrand wrote out telegrams, and the caretaker waited for them.

"Backin' the horses, no doubt," said McClasky confidentially, "as the uncle before him. I'm trustin' the chasers is well, Mr. Hannyside."

Hildebrand raised his head with a grunt.

"Great animals surely," said Sandy McClasky, enthusiastically. "I did give Mr. Hannyside a sheelin' once, and he sent me a postal order for twa an' sax. It wass a great deevidend entirely."

Hildebrand stormed out that he had nothing to say to godless, graceless racing, and he took Allenbury aside.

This was to hold a consultation as to the journey to Paris. Acland, suddenly discovering that he was suffering from a headache which would take at least two days' Scotch air, inhaled by the water, to cure, counselled the wisdom of writing. The concierge of the Villa Jasmin must be warned.

He also suggested their stopping at an hotel, as the villa

was very small and some way out. "Reginald told me he only breakfasted there," said Sandy. "It's a box."

"I," said Hildebrand, "shall certainly stop there. I have never been to the French capital, and the company I might encounter at these hotels would not suit me. One cannot touch pitch," went on Hildebrand.

"Or rub off powder and not get a little white on your cheek," said Nora wickedly.

"Of course some young men can never trust themselves," added Allenbury thoughtfully, "so better stay out in the green shades, Hildebrand."

"If he stays, I shall stay until the will is found," said Araminta excitedly.

Nora looked at her gravely, a gravity hiding a twinkle in her pretty grey Irish eyes.

"The devotion of cousins," she said softly. "Sandy—that is, Sandy, my husband—I am ready to fish."

Araminta wrote a letter to Jacques Leroux. Hildebrand could not, and she refused to allow directions to come from any one else. She explained loftily that she was a very fine French scholar.

Hildebrand presented his wires to Allenbury, directing him to put their cost down in the bill. "They are all counted," warned Hildebrand, "and noted down."

Alленbury put the papers in his pocket, and some words he would have delighted in speaking, back in his throat. Then he followed the Aclands to the river.

There was no poaching at Glenicurrie. Bailiffs patrolled the banks; the waters teemed with fish.

"Ah, but ye should tak' it on," said McClasky, "an' come here for the autumn. You should, Mrs. Acland, mem."

Nora, with a sigh, said they had heaps of fishing in Ireland, "but not like this."

To which McClasky replied that there were too many Fridays in Eerland for the feeshin'. "With the bailiffs hungry themselves, would they not be pullin' oot the

troutees for to eat," said Sandy. "It is here ye shud be, sir. With the sea but twa mile awa', eef ye have young men and leddies that like it."

Alexander the Great and his sister Kathleen would very much like it. As all mankind is possessed with the spirit of unrest in the month of August, and leaves his country home when it is at its loveliest, Nora sighed again; for the wild hills and the lakes, the rushing river, and the kiss of the salt air had won her heart.

It took two whole days of strenuous casting before Sandy was fit to travel.

He looked callously at the feverish anxiety of Araminta and Hildebrand as they hovered on the banks of the lakes and abused all things Scottish.

"Ah, but the leddy—the leddy can throw the line," said McClasky happily.

Mr. Allenbury fished also, without the wild enthusiasm of his companions, but with a keenly quiet enjoyment. His contentment was soon lessened by the fuming of his clients.

"They will know—soon enough," he would say grimly. "Oh soon enough, Acland."

An inherent meanness appeared to be engrained in both cousins. Araminta sent away chickens from the door because of their extreme expense. Hildebrand agreed with her until dinner time, when a rabbit, its painfully human contour outlined in onion sauce, was laid before them.

"The leddy an' the twa gentlemen is to a cold supper about ten," said Mr. McClasky acidly. "An' a' the feesh is gone by the post, so the bit rabbit an a shape of rice is all I can do."

But the pie which appeared at supper did not taste of rabbit—the salmon must have cooled with miraculous celerity as it was ready just ten minutes after the fishers came in.

"I'm really sorry to leave it," said Nora as they stood on the gravel sweep, ready to go. "It's almost like Ireland

here." The golden memories they left to Sandy McClasky and his wife made that worthy pair more anxious than ever for their return.

"Buy it a' up, ma'am," pleaded Mrs. McClasky. "There is a sair lot of cakes I have not med for ye the while."

She took a two-shilling piece from Araminta politely, while Hildebrand, as owner, considered it quite unnecessary to disburse tips.

"Surely," said Nora to the lawyer, a sudden thought striking her, "they won't leave those two people to pay for all our food."

Mr. Allenbury assured her decisively that even to a penny the score would be rendered in the accounts.

"Remarkably expensive place too—Scotland," he said cheerily. "Even rabbits are half a crown each, and coal is at famine prices."

Araminta was a bad sailor. She plied herself with a variety of patent medicines and then lay prone in a deck chair with a hot bottle clasped in her arms, growing greener to each slight roll of the boat; they crossed by Newhaven and Dieppe to save expense, but half-way across Araminta might have been taken for a reincarnation of Queen Mary, so often was the word Calais on her lips.

A fresh wind ruffled the blue sea, just enough to make the boat rise and fall softly. Hildebrand scorned sea sickness with an over-loud voice. He had only once been upset in his life, and that was ptomaine poisoning on the steamer cruising to Guernsey. "Bad sardines," said Hildebrand, eyeing the expanse of sea irritably. "I hope to Heaven—to-day, that our breakfast at Victoria——"

"Mr. Hannyside," said Nora, looking up, "I left my book in my bunk. I took a berth in case I felt bad. If you'd get it for me."

Hildebrand looked at Mrs. Acland's husband, but he was employed in rubbing the ankle he had been sharply knocked on.

"I'm not such a very good sailor myself," said Nora, "but

with a regular seadog like you one does not mind asking you to go below."

"He will not come back," said Nora, as Hildebrand rose, walked to the door and disappeared with a sudden rush. "And I am weary of Greater Bethel." Hildebrand was trying to repeat to them a whole discourse of Mr. Grimes how to keep his mind off being ill.

When Hildebrand appeared in the harbour at Dieppe he regretted a violent fit of neuralgia which had made it imperative for him to lie down. He was getting to the gangway with a faint attempt at jauntiness when a steward ran out hurriedly.

"The gentleman who was so very sick," he said, "has quite forgotten to pay for the brandy. Just one shilling. Thank *you*, sir," this with extreme politeness as two sixpences were irritably thrown upon him by a flushed and explaining youth.

"When I 'olds 'is fat 'ead again," said the third steward to a sailor, "when I does. Teetotaller too—took spirits to save his life, e' said. Not the first time he'd saved it neither."

Araminta, thanks to her precautions, had not been sick. She was in good spirits as the luxurious train sped out of Dieppe across fair and fertile France.

The finding of the will must be near at last. She would know how much Hildebrand had, and whether the diamonds were hers for ever. Araminta built castles in the air instead of looking out at the sun-lit landscape. They were peopled by an austere but worthy clergyman, who had now almost succumbed to her determination to marry him; and a life of devotion blended with discreet amusement in a London suburb. It was always wise to go to questionable plays so that one could discuss and condemn them afterwards. You cannot see the real harm a risky book does unless you read it. Araminta dreamed of rich joys, as then, coupled with lenten fasts, with early rising in autumn days; and a church exquisite with stained

glass. Also, remotely, of certain charities dispensed to East-End parishioners.

Hildebrand, with the relief of returning health, thought of Northlap when he was master. He would have a meeting-house in the park and only take servants who worshipped there. The stables should be turned into a parish hall. The name of Hannyside should no longer be stained by its appearance in the Calendar.

"Paris," said Nora, pointing to the distant spires of the great city.

They were flying by the deep waters of the Seine as it winds through the green valleys it waters.

Presently the ruinous and squalid houses which always seem to line the banks of great railway lines appeared on either side—changing to respectability as they come into the Gare d'Ouest.

Sandy and Allenbury endeavoured to leave the searching of the Villa Jasmin until the morning. There was really no time to go up there now. Baths, dinner, and theatre lay comfortably before them, but the headstrong impatience of Araminta and Hildebrand would not be subdued. They must at least go on to the villa.

"They are afraid to lose sight of each other," said Allenbury with grim enjoyment. "Drop our things at the Regina then, and take the pair over. I won't search to-night."

Taxis sped as Paris taxis do, swooping and gliding with complete contempt for the pedestrian, whom they would summon for obstruction if they ran him down. The Regina had been wired to for rooms, its soft pink-hued comfort was regretfully left, and against a lowering sky which talked of thunderstorms, they sped onwards.

The Villa Jasmin proved to be a tiny place, with a garden in front and room for a motor or horses at the back. It was what Mickey would have termed 'convaniant to the races' and out in the fresh air. Hannyside often

spent weeks there. He was fond of Paris, and detested hotels.

Jacques Leroux, a worthy man, who made no attempt at English, met them on the doorstep, his round, fat face completely bewildered.

It bore, in fact, so guilty a look, that Araminta stood at the gate and breathed suspicion.

"That person," she said austere, "has not attended to my explicit directions. I see it in his face."

"But, messieurs, mesdames, I am desolated, distressed," began Jacques, "but I."

Araminta took a step forward, then commenced to speak French—she spoke what she believed to be the language at a rapid rate, to show that she knew how it was done.

"N'avy voo pas recoo mon lettre?" said Araminta severely. "Dong cela j'ai ordonne." Here Nora giggled and Mr. Allenbury coughed. "Comman-die—directee," thundered Araminta, looking round. "A preparery soop——"

Jacques snapped hungrily at what he believed to be an English word, and one which he understood; before the "e" had leapt from Miss Mellicombe's lips, he cried that, as regarded potage, Marie, his wife, would have some of supreme excellence—mademoiselle looked pale. It was of onions and cabbage, but superb.

"Mon lettre," said Araminta firmly, and without understanding one word.

Mr. Allenbury then asked gently, in his French, what had become of mademoiselle's letter. "One which she wrote to you, Jacques—one written by mademoiselle in French.

Jacques wrung his hands as he informed monsieur that the language was truly the trouble. Had it but been in English he would have deciphered it. For were there not many places where it could have been translated? But on the faith of a Frenchman, Jacques cried that it was but a word here and there which he could read.

"The letter so difficult, it is somewhere," said Jacques, searching his pocket. "Times did we read, Marie and I, and monsieur know there is no trouble I would not take, for the lady said of a surety she was the niece of Monsieur Hannyside—we saw that *au fin*. And we have done much. Chickens—mademoiselle commanded chickens to be there for the cause that Mr. Hannyside was dead. And Ciel! We know not the customs of English mourners, but my good Marie she has procured them. Five, black-feathered, the kind of Minorca, now roost in the garage."

At this point Araminta stood to attention and ordered that English should be spoken, while Sandy, Nora, and Allenbury went to the door and caught choking colds in the draught.

Jacques was clearly distressed. He hoped to be remembered as a faithful servant.

"And all I could read that did I," wailed the caretaker. "The villain letter, where is she? Nay, but I have her in my mind. Ah, here is a portion."

Araminta gazed frigidly at the crumpled sheet of note-paper, as she called out triumphantly that the man must be a fool not to have understood.

"Voilà! Messieurs et mesdames—Regardez. Now shall I know how ignorant a scholar am I." He read slowly and painfully, holding the letter up so that its words were clearly visible.

"Nous auron besoin des poulets du cause de nous sommes en dool—quand nous arrivons à la maison de mon oncle mort. Nous resterons dedons la maison. Pre pares toutes vos lits pour nous avec drapeau seccouer."

Jacques waved the letter wildly.

"Monsieur, in obedience have I bought flags of various countries, and they now lie upon the beds——"

Nora leant against Sandy and wiped her eyes.

"There it is, absolutely clear," thundered Araminta, seizing her letter. "Have you the rooms ready then, man, les chambers à coucher?"

Jacques caught a word; he swung open a door off the hall; he bowed dutifully with a smile.

"But, mademoiselle!" he said. "See, this have I done." The opened door revealed a neat room, containing a bed covered with flags of various nationalities.

"There are of America, of England, of France," said Jacques proudly. "I will now with pleasure shake them myself. And all that can be done will I do. I, Jacques, with all my heart."

Chairs were ranged in the salon. Three people, incapable of containing themselves any longer, fell on to them, to gasp in the throes of helpless laughter, through which Jacques shook the stars and stripes vigorously. Araminta, sulkily aware of some mistake, said "how curious" acidly, and Hildebrand wished to know if every one was mad; while Phillips, who had once spent some years in France, choked respectfully.

"But is it that they are not right?" murmured Jacques, dropping the flag sadly. "But see, madame—as I was commanded. Have I then done wrong in the end?"

Nora's laughter had grown painful; she took the crumpled sheet. "It is secouer, Araminta. You meant dry"—she gasped—"and here is soupe, and here words I cannot read. And——"

"And the name for the keys?" grunted Hildebrand, looking contemptuously at the poor foreigner, who was obliged to gabble in his own language.

"And here," said Nora, following the lines with a shaking forefinger, "here, oh, Jacques. What is this?"

"*'Si vous avez les clefs gardez avec particularite,'* and, at the end, *'N'oubliez pas d'avoir un fou, parce que j'aime à regarder des fou toujours.'* Oh! oh!" said Nora faintly.

"Ah! But that"—Jacques's face fell—"that last request of the mademoiselle's, it was outside my power, messieurs. A person of weak intellects see—even to oblige the niece of my benefactor."

"Ara—Ara—minta!" gasped Nora. "Oh, Araminta!

As—as—there are only flags for you to sleep on, and onion soup for supper, and not even a fool at the stove-side, come back to the hotel before we die of exhaustion."

Araminta, flushed with wrath, said she failed to understand; one may make slight grammatical mistakes, she said, but there is no reason for laughter.

Nora wiped her eyes and looked reproachfully at her husband, who still roared.

Jacques, bewildered and sorrowful, hinted that he had not offended.

Five francs had he laid out upon the drapeaux, and to shake was of a simplicity, and the chickens of Minorca black as night——

"He is mad," said Araminta—"mad, Mrs. Acland——"

"Dear! dear!" gurgled Nora. "Oh, put them all on the bill, Mr. Allenbury."

Mr. Allenbury took a note grimly.

"I cannot see my mistakes," said Araminta haughtily.

"You meant sheets, but you wrote flags," said Nora; "and there is no *r* to your souper. Come, we are too weak to search to-night."

The cousins were removed unwillingly. Hildebrand ordered breakfast at the villa at nine. Nora, knowing France, smiled as she murmured twelve to Madame Leroux, a pretty, brown-eyed woman, who promised to have *déjeuner* for them.

Hildebrand wished suspiciously to know if Nora had mentioned eggs. And also why the deuce the two ignorant fools could not speak plain English, to which Nora wisely returned that after all he could not talk French, and that eggs would no doubt be provided.

Araminta sat stiffly in the car.

"Why had every one laughed, and why had her directions been ignored? It is a plot," said Araminta darkly.

"The French for flags and sheets and shake and to dry are terribly confusing to the poor foreigner," suggested Nora cheerfully.

Here she forbade Sandy to laugh any more.

Miss Mellicombe reddened angrily, and after a pause returned that one often forgot little ends of French, and then, after another pause, as she searched for lost prestige, that, of course, no doubt peasants only understood patois. And, in any case, the words are quite alike, she said, to persons of education.

"If I were to write to you, Araminta, to put shakos on my bed, you would not . . . Sandy, you will be ill," said Mrs. Acland severely.

"I would not buy Union Jacks," said Araminta snappily, as the car hummed through the Place de la Concorde.

Araminta, objecting to a French theatre on the grounds that the Reverend Eustace would place a penance on her when she confessed to him later on, Mr. Allenbury suggested duly that they should go to a variety entertainment of extreme mildness. Hildebrand, though imbued by fear of contamination, went with them because he would not let Araminta out of his sight, and two taxis wafted them to the Folies Bergères.

Some performing animals upon the stage amused France when it looked at them, followed by a gymnast of extreme skill and dullness, and Araminta settled down to it with a sigh of content.

"She knew that Mr. Eustace," she said, "had once engaged performing dogs to amuse the Sunday school, so it must be all right."

Hildebrand, on the other hand, remained suspicious. He was as far removed from Araminta as seating space would allow, and he made audible asides to Sandy, referring gloomily to every woman he saw in a term, which in his accent sounded like a co-operative firm which had been captured. On Sandy's repeated head-shakes he grew easier, and even eloquent when, between the turns, they sat at tables outside to drink coffee and orangeade.

He thought people must know each other very well,

because it reminded him, he said, of a large family party. Every one moving about and quite friendly.

"If you," said Sandy, "were to go up to——"

"Sandy!" said Nora sharply.

"My dear, I was about to observe," said Sandy mildly.

"Well, don't observe it," said Nora, relapsing into good humour.

"What I was going to tell him," said Sandy later, "was that if many people knew each other he might join one of the groups and safely say he had met them at a house party and they had forgotten him."

"I am ashamed of you, Sandy," said Mrs. Acland severely. "And I would have given the grey mare's foal to see it," she added, after a pause.

CHAPTER V

An offer, uncle, that we will accept.
—Richard II.

HILDEBRAND HANNYSIDE did not take his *thé complet* next morning because he thought early tea in an hotel an unnecessary extravagance. He rang vigorously, without observing the instructions on the bell, so that a pretty *femme de chambre* discovered him, to his complete surprise, in the surplice-like garment adopted for his slumbers.

At her sweet remark of "Monsieur a sonné," Hildebrand plunged beneath the bedclothes with a yell, and requested a garçon in tones of anguish.

His bath was completely marred when he inquired its cost, though the ingrained cleanliness of the Saxon made him endure the extravagance.

He went down to the prettily furnished hall to find Araminta coming from a solid English breakfast of eggs and bacon.

"Bacon really made of a pig," said Araminta in suppressed tones, "for I asked the man if it was not of rabbits and coloured, and he looked quite astonished."

Sandy and Nora were not dressed until after ten, but they comforted the fuming cousins by offering to start at once for the Villa.

"I," said Hildebrand sulkily, "have ordered my—er—dejourney they call it here—and I am hungry."

Sandy said they had all ordered it, and that rolls were undoubtedly not satisfying.

The end of their quest seemed really near. They grew

cheerfully elated as they flew along up to the summer greenery of the Bois.

"Have you really never," Sandy asked Hildebrand, "really never been abroad before?"

"Except to visit my lamented uncle; and I came across country by slow trains. I have never left Lesser Cheriton," said Hildebrand proudly. "My mother warned me of the temptations of the outer world. In our home we have trees and grass and cows and godliness as the years step by."

Sandy absently hummed a verse written by Gilbert—it was something as to a little cot where breezes hum; and his wife checked his poetic tendencies by remarking that breezes blew and bees hummed—to which Hildebrand added an audible aside that bees was not grammar.

"And——"

"I wonder, this," he said. "I wonder that you *care* about the will, as, Hildebrand, you want to live out in the world at Northlap Priory."

Hildebrand said earnestly that he could make another Lesser Cheriton out of Northlap, with a meeting-house and earnest servants, and in time win the villagers to his community.

"Oh, coal and things will do that," said Nora absently, looking out.

Hildebrand, flushing hotly, said he hoped that persuasion would do it—and eloquence.

"Coals," said Nora still absently, still looking out. "They'll come to your place in the evenings, and attend when they are happy in the morning. I stayed with an aunt who had a fad for mouth-organs once."

Hildebrand opened his mouth in faint interrogation.

"Or was it tuning-forks?" said Nora; "and no harmonium or prayer-books, just like you. Some one used to tell us lots of nasty things and make up prayers between them, you know, as they went along. All just like you, I expect. And then as we came out I heard

them say that 'it amuses her Ladyship, it do, and it couldn't harm a child.' Just like yours."

"Mrs. Acland," said Hildebrand heavily, "if I had you just once at Lesser Cheriton, with Mr. Grimes discoursing."

"Oh the saints above preserve me," said Nora, lapsing into sudden broad Irish.

Jacques was at the door as they drove up. Bewilderment having passed from him, he was completely affable and pleased to see them.

They went into the neat salon to commence their search. There were two bureaux, and several locked-up drawers in tables; but Mr. Allenbury had all his late client's keys.

It was Hildebrand now who delayed them, as he stood asking for his breakfast—his "dejoonay."

Sandy said it would be ready by one; and was surprised at that youth's dismayed expression.

"But eggs—oofs in French—and bacon," said Hildebrand plaintively. "I cannot starve. I ordered mine here."

As it dawned upon them that young Hannyside had really left the hotel with no food to sustain him, Sandy gave hurried directions to Madame Jacques, and during the fitting of the keys a light repast of coffee and rolls was brought in.

It was half-past twelve when Allenbury began to look grave. They had gone through every paper in the bureaux, finding several there which were eagerly pounced upon. They had broken open one or two places which had no keys to fit them. And there was no will.

"He said it was in Paris, and that he was coming to fetch it." Mr. Allenbury turned a troubled face. "You know, if there is nothing, I don't know how things will go."

The excellent déjeuner provided by the pretty little Frenchwoman, omelette and sole, cutlets, galantines, strawberries, and cherries—was eaten without appetite by two people.

"Monsieur was always particular," said Madame Leroux

modestly, "as sometimes he would sup here following a theatre."

The *salle à manger* had few hiding-places. They looked in the small, neat bedroom which Reginald Hannyside had slept in. They broke open a small desk by his bed. No will could be found.

There were some letters in the desk ; one commenced and not finished. "Will call for it in a day or two ; quite safe with——" and no more.

"I really begin to fear," said Mr. Allenbury, "that my late friend was eccentric—eccentric but not foolish. Not foolish. He said he had left the will here—he, in fact, made it here—that he kept it to add a codicil, which he took instructions for, so as to be sure it was legal ; and then he came home. He said he had left it in safe keeping. I imagined at first at a bank."

"We must open the letter Mr. Acland holds," said Mr. Hildebrand ; "we must."

"We must not," said Sandy equably, "until next year. That is a trust to me."

"But if I, as heir, give you leave to," said Hildebrand, flushing.

Here Araminta flashed out spitefully that no one knew that he was heir. "If there's no will, you'll get half," she said ; "less than half. We'll say, what's left."

"Half the diamonds," stormed Hildebrand.

"Half the house," yelled Araminta.

"Half the china," said Hildebrand.

"Half the lawyer's bills," said Araminta ; "and a nice thing that will be if there is a sale and a division."

Here Mr. Allenbury said politely that in any case he would endeavour to make that part nice, and he ground his teeth faintly.

"Phillips," Sandy called his man, "Phillips, is there anywhere else to look ?"

Phillips coughed discreetly. "Having been conversing with Jacques, sir," he said, "Jacques, venez ici ! With

Jacques, sir, I have discovered that Mr. Hannyside had a lady friend."

Araminta, unclamping herself, wished to know if *she* ought to leave the room.

"A *friend*, madame," said Phillips severely, "Jacques will explain."

"But an old friend of great wit and cleverness," said Jacques, "and confidante to all monsieur's affairs. Madame de l'Araine she was here, oh, but often for the English five o'clock after the races. She, and monsieur her husband the Comte."

"Rest assured, Araminta," said Nora, "Monsieur the Comte also came."

But the kernel of the information was, that just before Monsieur Hannyside had left for England, Jacques had seen him give a sealed packet to madame and her husband.

"'As you have scolded me for only locking it up in that drawer,' he said, 'put it in your safe for me. I will leave it here, for I may think of another codicil before I come again.' And at this, monsieur laughed," said Jacques, "as a boy might."

Mr. Allenbury twirled the leaves of a telephone book feverishly, De l'Araine—he got the number. "Holà there. What! Madame had crossed to England but two days ago—the address. Yes. Madame had descended at the Hotel Savoy . . . in the rue Strand."

The ringing up of taxis was almost feverish; the flight to a telegraph office a swift one.

"Make it plain French," said Hildebrand, with a glance at Araminta, "plain and simple."

It was impolite of Mr. Allenbury to murmur, "Have you the last will of my client's uncle,"—but as he said it in French it was more excusable.

"English," he said mildly, "will without doubt be more intelligible to the Comtesse than my French."

It was dinner time before the answer came.

"I've had the will for months. Seeing death, took it to

England. Have now posted—registered to you at Northlap. De l'Araine."

"Oh, it's found, it's found!" cried Araminta. "But, it is sent to you, Mr. Allenbury, to you." Araminta's voice was tragical.

"Any of my clerks," said Mr. Allenbury mildly, "may now open it, and add a codicil, but no doubt they'll wait for me. A train at nine or ten? Are we not going to see the best play in Paris now that our anxiety is over? I do not start to-night."

Hildebrand, possessed of shrewder sense than Araminta, was not afraid of Allenbury & Allenbury. He grew hilarious on Eau Crystal; he praised his sole; waxed enthusiastic over his entrée, which was something in a creamy sauce. The others took eggs in a cunningly flavoured jus.

"Good things these, Hildebrand; I don't like them myself," said Sandy, looking at the menu thoughtfully, "it's prejudice, but snails always put me . . ."

"He's really feeling it," said Mr. Allenbury, looking at Hildebrand's vanishing back. "Some people *will* associate them with seedlings and soot."

"And gardeners' heels," said Nora. "Poor Hildebrand. He will be so hungry about ten."

The majestic reserve with which Hildebrand cloaked himself later did not point to his feeling any emotion save that of sulk. Sandy, in reply to a bitter attack, said meekly that he read French so badly, especially menus, that he could not give warning.

"The first time I came to Paris," he ruminated, "I pointed out to the waiter that I was not a tailor, or a steel swallow, and he spoke English so indifferently that it took five minutes to make me understand that I had mistaken *Anguille* for *Aiguille*."

Hildebrand was not to be conciliated. "If I had not mentioned snails," he said gloomily. "And frogs. For all I know they may have been croaking in the soup."

He sat silent and hungry during a play which he did not understand. Araminta, on the contrary, enjoyed it hugely. "It was so useful," she said, "to know French so thoroughly," and if she had not continued to laugh at the pathetic moment when the hero informed his love of his mother's death, and his loss of all his fortune, some one might have believed her.

Sandy and Nora were sorry to leave Paris. They bargained for one more day, to see the Salon. Mr. Allenbury helped them with barefaced but cunning untruths concerning certain papers he had discovered in the safes.

Hildebrand looked up at all the statues as lost creatures wrought in marble. He spoke with bated breath of the abandoned artists who had modelled them.

"For it could not all have been done from books," said Hildebrand coldly—staring at a group of nymphs.

"Or even memory," said Allenbury, looking vacantly towards a blameless bust of a celebrity.

"Thank Heaven, Nora," said Sandy as he got into the car at Northlap Station. "Thank Heaven it is nearly over. I seem to have done nothing but get out at this station for years."

Delia met them with the warm joy of her race. She had been left behind in England.

"She had learned a lot about racehorses," she told them, "being down to the stables below with Mистер Watson. Christians they must be, the way he takes on about them," said Delia.

The gathering of the clans had commenced again. Cousins of various degrees came flying to Northlap, hoping for a little legacy.

"My boy is called Reginald, and is a godson," said one. "My little girl got a box of chocolates from him every Christmas," declared another. "He never forgot the date; such a memory." The lady who hoped for china hovered about the Chelsea figures, wondering which group might be hers.

The solemn reading of the will was upon them. They gathered into the library, and Mr. Allenbury opened the roll of stiff parchment, covered with legal writing.

Araminta, in an excellent humour, sat by Nora, whispering to her that she felt sure that Mr. Eustace would now give up all ideas of celibacy.

"We can do so much," whispered Araminta, "with my money ; in fact I shall endeavour to get Arthur to move from the slums."

Then silence, Hildebrand having coughed disapprovingly towards Araminta. Summer hummed outside the windows.

Mr. Allenbury said "hem," and his eyes twinkled.

The last will and testament. Lesser matters first. Names of cousins plucked from the legal jargon. Mrs. Hannyside Martin got her Chelsea figures and a Nankin vase as well. Other minor legacies made the cousins sniff angrily.

Then the testator bequeathed Northlap Priory, etc., etc., to his nephew, Hildebrand Hannyside, and his niece, Araminta Mellicombe.

The cousins both jumped up—murmuring to both. We—A moment please—Allenbury checked them. There are conditions—listen carefully.

The bequest carried with it the condition that the Northlap racing stud was to be kept up until a horse running in Hildebrand Hannyside's name should win the Grand National. Until then, in fact, everything was held in trust. A sum was set apart for the upkeep of the horses—a pension named for the old favourites.

And old Reginald Hannyside explained that he would not offend the principles of either nephew or niece. Above all they were FREE. For should either refuse to jointly carry on the stud, this one could withdraw and receive ten thousand pounds. Again, they were at liberty to release themselves by marrying each other, in which case the stud and its revenue passed to the charge of Mary Knox, coupled with an allowance of three thousand a year for

extra expenses. In event of the cousins marrying, Northlap and its revenues—depleted by the large sum set aside for the racers—passed to them.

Watson wiped his forehead and groaned aloud. He was asked to stay on, and a sum of one thousand pounds was to be paid to him when the National was at last won. Miss Mary Knox was for the present to be provided for at the discretion of the co-heirs. It was left to their generosity to continue her allowance.

There was a long pause. The cousins were standing up now, and the silence was broken by a gurgle from Araminta.

Allenby looked at them. Some of the contented legatees moved towards Hildebrand, who was purple.

"I should advise a cooling drink for young Mr. Hannyside," said the lawyer's voice. "Smelling salts are, I am told, good for hysteria; perhaps some lady would get a bottle for Miss Mellicombe, while I proceed."

"Further, Alexander Acland, of Castleknock, Ireland, was sole trustee and co-executor with Mr. Allenbury, and an urgent request was made to him to superintend the racing stables until the National was captured. 'It was my life's hobby. It is my dying request,' came the words, 'if my niece and nephew elect to remain at Northlap jointly keeping up my stud, I ask Mr. Acland and his wife to reside there, all expenses being seen to, and when the race is won, the sum of ten thousand pounds—to repay the inconvenience caused by leaving his Irish home—to be handed to the said Alexander Acland if the wishes of the testator are complied with. Also, the little lodge of Glenicurrie, in Scotland, free of rent for ever.'"

"There are a few minor legacies and directions, said Mr. Allenbury, "which can be passed over now. Yes, Miss Mellicombe?"

For Araminta, pale and haggard, was on her feet. "You mean to say," she gasped, "that I—that we—that I—Mr. Eustace's follower, am to keep up these racehorses? We won't do it."

"Those brutes," gurgled Hildebrand, "in my name."

Mr. Allenbury, folding up the long will, said it was optional. They were not forced to keep the stud.

Araminta, muttering "Oh! Oh!" fell stiffly back into her chair and fainted, just as two people bustled in with a syphon of soda and a bottle of smelling salts. She lay stiff and rigid, and a flushed male sympathiser pressed the nozzle so that a refreshing flow of Schweppe's struck her face with some force, while the lady who found the salts held them up to Hildebrand's nose, in her confusion.

Araminta came to with some show of temper, and Hildebrand retreated, gasping out words which he ought never to have learnt at Lesser Cheriton.

"And in the event," he cried, "of our both refusing this insult——"

"H—m, I have read it, but of course it's confusing," said Allenbury wearily. "If you both refuse either to marry or keep up the horses, the bulk of the estate passes to Miss Knox, and a sum of sixty thousand pounds will be divided between you."

Araminta was recovering her shrewdness. "It is the wickedest, most uncharitable will," she wailed. "It," she got up unsteadily, "was a will put into my good uncle's head by——"

Mr. Allenbury tapped his fingers upon the table, his face flushing.

"By a dishonest, unscrupulous person," sniffed Araminta, looking hard at him furiously. "By some one interested in that Mollie Knox. Where is she?"

Mollie was not there to answer.

"Miss Knox has taken a governess's situation," said Mr. Allenbury; "she found she could not get on in London without an allowance."

"Race horses!" sobbed Araminta.

"Beasts of Belial!" groaned Hildebrand.

Araminta bowed her head. "It will, I presume, be my

part to undertake the sacrifice," she said, "my views being wider than Hildebrand's. I will do it alone."

Hildebrand bouncing up said that in this case it was to him a cross and no sin, but he hoped Araminta would not outrage her conscience.

Mr. Allenbury waited for a lull and asked where the cousins would live until the National was finally won. "The stable can be kept and Northlap shut up," he suggested.

"If," said Araminta savagely, "we make up our minds, if Hildebrand finds his conscience allows him to keep a racing stud we will both live here."

"With, of course, a suitable chaperon," said Hildebrand hastily.

"But Hildebrand *cannot* do it," said Miss Mellicombe firmly, "I see that. He will give up the legacy."

Hildebrand observed sulkily that he possessed a heart.

"And," Araminta Mellicombe stood in rigid rage, breathing audibly through her nose.

"And I presume," she said haughtily, "that your firm continues the paying task of acting for the estate until—until some four-footed beast is first in the race termed the National. The delay is paying for *some* people, Mr. Allenbury.

"It is clearly stated as to our continuing to act," said Allenbury.

"Then I wish to state," said Araminta coldly, "that I shall see to every item carefully."

Mr. Allenbury kept his temper and said he feared they would be varied. "Special dishes when travelling, snails and other things," he said smoothly, "a great many extras will appear in that way."

The various cousins rose to step away, so as to enjoy the dispute discreetly from door and window, as Araminta shouted to the gods above that she would not pay for Hildebrand's snails. "If we are to be disgraced, contaminated by association with this stable of horses," she panted, "let us be careful."

"Should you decide to marry," said the lawyer crisply, "you cut the gordian knot, and lose a much minor portion of your inheritance."

Araminta remarked that her heart was in the keeping of a revered and godly saint.

Hildebrand spoke gloomily of Miss Susannah Grimes.

And both talked together rapidly of the worship of images by one, and the absurd fads and nonsense of the other; Hildebrand exclaimed with hand upraised that he would never marry a wife who fasted on Fridays, and smoked cigarettes and powdered her nose, while Araminta remarked firmly that marriage with a youth who had never until a week ago seen a town, who ate cold supper on Sunday, and looked on a theatre as a place of sin, was obviously impossible to a person of her culture and advanced ideas.

Sandy had not as yet said a word. He got up slowly at last, and called his wife to the terrace outside the open French window.

"Do you quite see," he said blankly, "where I come in?"

Nora looked at him plaintively.

"Apparently," said Sandy, pausing for a moment to listen to the stormy weeping of Miss Mellicombe, who feared to faint again while the syphon was by her side on a table, "apparently, this means our living over here with these two—er—cousins. Leaving Castleknock, Nora, sitting here waiting for horses to win Nationals."

"But, ten thousand pounds," said Nora, "and that glorious place in Scotland—that fishing place in Scotland, Sandy, with the gamekeeper lining the banks and a bailiff in every salmon."

Sandy interrupted to say: "Of course the last attraction seemed unique, but——"

"It is not unique, it is Scotch; and don't you interrupt," said Nora blightingly. "Oh Sandy!"

"But," Sandy waved his hands—"what about Hildebrand and Araminta in every room and, with one party

wanting to go esht and the other wesht, to quote Con with the young horses? And living here, Nora, here, away from Castleknock, for a year, for perhaps two years. The National is not so easily won."

Nora picked a rose from the terrace and bit the stalk slowly. "I fancy that horse Popoff," she said. "I do."

"His name is not Popoff, and Watson says he is too small," returned her husband dolorously.

"A little refreshment, sir, and a biscuit," said Phillips, advancing with a jug and glass upon a tray, the cool clink of wine glugging softly as he came.

Mr. Acland inquired acridly if Phillips did not know that it was his master's rule never to drink between meals.

"Having heard the will read, sir," said Phillips apologetically, "from here just outside the window, considered it exceptional, sir. Cider cup, sir," he said, "made by my own hands, assisted by Marston's. Marston is a little uncertain in his mixture, sir, owing to content as a legatee."

The cider cup was a concoction in which cider was a faint memory. Sandy sipped some slowly.

"Phillips," he burst out, "you've heard it, what would you do? What would you do? Leave Ireland, come to live here, where the very skies look tidy? Endure it for a mere legacy I don't want?"

"But your friend's request," said Nora, "and that place in Scotland, Sandy."

"Great many pennies in a thousand pounds, sir," said Phillips thoughtfully. "Almost beyond counting, in fact, sir."

Sandy looked at his wife and groaned. He had all he wanted in life, but Nora, he knew, felt there were several arrangements might be made with the ten thousand pounds, and also Nora adored fishing.

Mr. Allenbury, flushed from annoyance, came out on to the terrace.

"Cider cup," he said thirstily. "Another tumbler,

Phillips. I say, I knew there would be an upset when that will was read. The only thing that troubled him was that he would not be here to see. What," said Allenbury, "will you do? Take it up. I hope and trust."

Sandy said nothing.

"They'll fight," said Nora, "like the Kilkenny cats."

"They will fight," said Mr. Allenbury, "from morning until eve. If Araminta picks a leaf, Hildebrand will say the tree may be his soon. If Hildebrand orders out a motor, Araminta will snap it is the one she meant to choose. Neither will retire for the other, rest assured of that. I envy Watson," said the lawyer; "I do envy Watson."

"In misfortune," said Sandy, "it is always comforting to think of some one who may suffer more than oneself—one's unhappy self."

"Araminta will order fish dinners on Fridays, and Hildebrand high teas on Sundays," said the lawyer.

Here Mrs. Acland interposed blandly that if she stayed on she would have something to say to the housekeeping.

Allenbury put down his glass and gave way to sudden merriment. "He thought it out for months," he said, "for months. I won't wrong them, he used to say, but my horses shall be kept up. He knew that neither would ever give up a penny they could keep. For God's sake, Acland," pleaded Mr. Allenbury, "stay on and help me, because with brokers about and Hildebrand at his worst, and we've been a respectable firm so far. None of us have killed any one."

"What I *cannot* make out," said Sandy, "is the lack of provision for that little girl Mollie. Reggie must have known what they would do."

Mr. Allenbury laughed heartlessly. "He . . . may not have finished yet," he said softly. "She has a place now—in—Ireland. We advised her to take it. At a Mrs. Moriarty's Ballyveneen is the house."

Sandy said enthusiastically that Mollie was sweet.

"Her father was Irish," he added, "and the girl is a darling."

At this point Araminta, red of eyelid and furious of aspect, came heavily along the terrace, and Hildebrand, sulky and crimson-cheeked, followed her.

They stood glaring at each other.

"I have decided," said Araminta, "to waive my personal convictions in my respect for those of the dead. I am willing to await the winning of the Grand National; but my cousin Hildebrand," she went on, "is so deeply, really religious, he no doubt——"

"He's dashed if he will," snarled Hildebrand, sitting down. "He's just as much dead to me as he is to you, Araminta, if it comes to that."

"My religion," said Araminta, "is not narrow-minded—that is, so earnest, that Mr. Eustace will understand."

Hildebrand touched the stone balustrades of the terrace as he muttered that so would Miss Grimes. "We'll just live on here," he said aggressively; "and if you decide to stay, there'll be Mrs. Acland; if you don't, we have cousins." He looked hopefully at Sandy. A meek and dependent cousin was far more to his mind.

The look lighted the spirit of opposition which smoulders continually in the heart of man.

"I think I too will respect the wishes of the dead," said Sandy mildly.

After a pause the cousins began to talk, both at once, and rapidly, both showering abuse on the will, on its iniquitous injustice, on the malice and bitterness contained in it.

"Knowing we would rather die than marry. Knowing that all horse racing was to me a deadly sin," wept Araminta, again lapsing into tears.

"That the very name of the turf stank in my nostrils," stormed Hildebrand.

"But he was advised," said Araminta tragically; "he was advised by a person with an evil, wicked mind . . ."

"About Miss Knox, then," said Allenbury, swallowing something in his throat, "and her allowance . . ."

As two dogs which snarl at each other, set upon a common enemy, the cousins grew immediately sympathetic when it came to a question of spending money.

"Miss Knox is in a place," said Araminta.

"Fed and well looked after," added Hildebrand.

They looked at each other equably.

"I thought of say—two pounds a month," said Araminta.

"An excellent addition for a governess's income."

"Your maid, I fancy, receives that," said Allenbury slowly.

Araminta said that this was in *addition* to salary; she said it very distinctly so that it might penetrate to a dense brain also; that Mr. Allenbury must remember that any allowance came directly out of their money, and that if they were to pauperize Miss Knox by a reckless gift of say one hundred yearly, so foolish a person might consider herself independent, give up earning her living, and fall into idle, perhaps bad ways. "All that then would be upon our consciences," said Araminta loftily. "Do you not concur, Hildebrand?"

Hildebrand did not; he thought twenty pounds yearly—five pounds a quarter—should be sufficient for any young person of simple tastes, but he would be magnanimous and allow the extra two pounds ten. This could be put in writing and was now settled.

Sandy, looking at the two disagreeable, mean young faces, wondered how much dislike he could manage to feel towards fellow mortals.

"With affairs as they are, and with money in abeyance and divided up," put in Hildebrand, "the first thing to do is to reduce this establishment. Several housemaids and the footmen can go, also the expensive cook, with ungodly ideas as to hot dinners on the Sabbath; and as to feeding that fat, useless butler——"

Something or some one seemed to suffer from choking

in the room behind them. Sandy looked up and smiled faintly.

"One motor-car will be sufficient."

Araminta said, acidly, that she meant, if she stayed at Northlap, to have one for herself.

Mr. Allenbury coughed quietly. "There is a special provision under the will," he said, "that no alteration is to be made in the affairs at Northlap until all affairs are finally settled. It is, if any one lives here, to be kept up as at its present size."

"And the wages?" snapped Araminta.

"I see to," said Allenbury blandly.

The various cousins began to gather for tea. Downstairs, a fat and irate cook received news of the discussion as to their dismissal.

"Had a like to choke, I had," said Marston, as he superintended the cutting of the sandwiches. "Not one move out of us, Mrs. Peters, if only to spite them beauties."

"Not one move," said Mrs. Peters firmly. "I hope that long she-dragon makes it her business to send me on. But there's ways," murmured the cook as she took out iced cakes from the cupboard, "there's ways. Young Mr. Hildebrand has an especial taste in bacon, American hock isn't over good fried, and there's a few things Miss Araminta is greedy on too."

"The beauties," said Marston as he took the laced tea-cloth from the pantry and headed his procession.

The various cousins were all in fairly good humour with their various legacies; they murmured confidences to each other, and occasionally sympathized with Araminta, who presided thunderously at the tea-table.

"You will tell the cook from me, Marston, the muffins are sodden and quite unfit to eat."

"Mrs. Peters, madam," said Marston, "will make due complaint at Harrod's Stores. Muffins come down daily, madam."

Araminta relapsed into aggrieved silence until she rang

the bell to complain to Phillips, who answered, of the plum-cake, which was unpleasantly heavy. "This, I presume, did not come from Harrod's Stores?" she snapped.

"Certainly not, madam," said Phillips gravely, lifting up the offending cake. "In fact, only yesterday from the oven, madam, but doubtless the cook's feelings, madam." He paused expressively.

"Send Marston here," directed Miss Mellicombe coldly, "and kindly leave the cake."

Sandy strolled to the rose garden with his wife. His habitually cheery little face was wrapped in gloom.

"How, how are we to do it, Nora?" he said. "How? This is only June."

"We'll send them off for a little and we'll get off for a little," said Nora, "and with the children and a dog or two it won't be so bad. Besides"—she bent forward—"I have ideas, Sandy, in my head."

Sandy said "Indeed!" patiently, adding polite inquiry as to where they generally came.

"Some people," said Mrs. Acland, "have no heads to put them in. I am going down to see the racers, Sandy; come with me."

CHAPTER VI

Is it possible disdain should die?

—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

NORA ACLAND walked across to the stables wrapped in a silence which made Sandy anxious.

There was an air of sadness about the place, the helpers muttered to each other instead of doing their work. The spirit of the man who had loved his horses seemed to hover about the yards.

As Sandy and his wife walked briskly in they saw Delia, with slightly heightened colour, endeavour to whisk out of sight round a corner, and then stop as if she had never thought of it.

Mr. Watson appeared, a moment later, from a stable.

"The cook above, ma'am," explained Delia, "has me sent down for some eggs. She bein' short."

"Yes," said Mrs. Acland cheerfully. "Yes, Delia."

"And Mr. Watson havin' the grandest speckedly hens," went on the hand-maiden. "So I ran across."

Mrs. Acland smiled even more cheerily. Watson was subdued, less superior and more human. He honestly missed his master. He felt lost under the new ownership.

"Sad, sir," he said drearily. "Sad. And I wouldn't stay with them two, even for the extra legacy which I get with a win, but he would not like me to leave the Fancy, and so I'll see it out. There'll be changes, sir."

Sandy was explaining quietly that the stable was to run on its old lines, without stint or hindrance, when Miss Mellicombe stalked majestically under the arched gateway, her cousin Hildebrand by her side.

"Watson," she said sharply.

Watson shut a stable door and came slowly across the yard.

"We have decided," said Araminta, "that there must be a great deal of waste here, and we wish to go through it all with you, Watson. Every penny spent upon these stables comes out of our inheritance," groaned Araminta bitterly.

"Each shilling saved, is so much to us," said Hildebrand.

Mr. Watson chewed a straw thoughtfully, he made no comment, the horses were getting their evening feed. Hildebrand entered a stable and wished to know what was done with what was left if an animal was not hungry. Watson said "Hens," laconically, "and chickens, an'——"

Araminta and Hildebrand could always agree when they wished to—they ejaculated "Not our hens," simultaneously. Then they explained to Mr. Watson, that for the future all oats left over were to be collected and dried and used again.

"Principal of a naughty child 'as the fat or the meat, miss," said Watson. "Not suitable for race 'orses, Miss Mellicombe."

Araminta barked out that her orders were to be taken and obeyed. Mr. Watson coughed and sighed. He made a note of it with a sudden twinkle in his eyes.

"When this godless race is over and won," observed Hildebrand, "I shall turn these stables into something useful. The shed would make a parish hall, and no doubt some farmers would take the stables for cattle-stands and pay for them."

"If they are ever yours," snapped Araminta.

"There are some horses, sir," said Watson to Sandy, "I have my eye on. I've heard a five-year-old by Hackler is running well in Ireland, and in three or four years' time we might find him useful. Then there's a two-year-old, the Hackler horse—Hack Car, is going cheap—they'll take eight hundred."

Araminta showed symptoms of choking. She wished to

know when she recovered why any more horses should ever be wanted.

"To go on trying, madam," said Watson curtly. "Mr. Acland will understand, and it is in his hands. Mr. Hannyside tried for twenty years, madam."

"For twenty years." Araminta sat down on a wheelbarrow. "So much money wasted each day, each month on these guzzling brutes—these unwanted horses. These useless, horrible things not wanted any more now there's petrol," almost sobbed Araminta.

"These snares of the devil," groaned Hildebrand. "I understood that the race *must* be secured next year by Red Fancy."

"Sometimes about twenty-three other horses go out for the National, and out of these perhaps six finish," said Sandy mildly. "Cheer up, Hildebrand, think of watching your own horse out for the cross country blue riband; think of the parade."

Araminta raised her hands in protest, and the barrow tipped up. Hildebrand and Watson picked the wrathful lady from the ground and Sandy left.

He heard Araminta declaiming loudly that it was all the fault of these beastly racehorses, for without them there would have been no barrows.

The old favourites were summering in big loose boxes, looking on to a shady paddock. There was even an artificial stream turned on where the horses could stand in the running water.

Sandy sat down on a bank and looked at the old horses, but his mind did not tune with the peace of the June day. He kept humming a little monologue to himself, half unconsciously.

"I see nothing," observed Nora, who had followed him, "to sing songs about, Sandy, and as for odes to these two." Sandy, suddenly becoming aware that his theme was merely "Ar—a—mint—aa, Hil—dee—brand," stopped and blushed.

"They won't go out of my head," he said mournfully. "If they were Jack and Jill or Sam and Sue, but Ar—a—mint—aa, Hil—dee—brand."

"That will do, Sandy," said his wife firmly. "It will do."

"Have you considered," Sandy went on, "how, if we take up this affair, how many times we shall repeat their names in ten years?"

"Ten thousand pounds," murmured Nora.

"Peace," said Sandy.

"And—the white trout," said Nora briskly. "And contingencies. They'll never last at it. I have hopes. They are reprovng the stable boys now for not going to church. I left them at it." Nora opened the paddock-gate. She went up to Ben Nevis, who rubbed his nose against her hand. "The old dears." Nora called to Delia to fetch some carrots. "One wonders if they ever think of their hey-day," she said; "of the parade, the glorious rush away with all the flying, panting life of it, and their hearts ready for the gallop, the great fences flung behind, the struggling on and on, and then, for this poor old boy, the sudden thrill of pain and the limp home, his racing days over. He would have won, they tell me."

"They are coming," said Sandy tragically.

"These old beasts at least," remarked Hildebrand, "can be reduced to hay in winter and no bran or oats. They are not racers. And cheap hay, Watson. The sooner these incubi die the better."

Mr. Watson breathed heavily through his nose; he looked at Sandy.

"We'll buy that Irish horse," said Sandy cheerfully; "and that two-year-old. And—sorry to disappoint you, Hildebrand, but the feeding here will be unaltered. This is my show."

"On my money," panted the fat youth. "A nice plot, I call it."

"The only carrots I could lay me hands to," said Delia,

as she returned, "was these little red ones grown in the patch of garding." She had filled the skirt of her dress with small red carrots. Watson sighed resignedly. They were a vegetable he was fond of.

Nora fed the horses, and remarked, apropos of nothing, that she did not believe any young horses trained in England did good in chases. "It's the climate," she said, "or something. Now, if you had this stud at Castleknock, Mr. Watson."

Sandy jumped. Watson laughed sardonically.

"Where there is no oats an' no straw, but what comes from it," he said illogically, "an' all things inferior."

Delia raised her pretty face with battle flagged upon it. Nora drew the other people away.

"The finest races ever ye clapped eyes on," said Delia fiercely. "I tell ye—with crowds so thick ye cannot see the grass, an' Aunt Sallys, an' three-card men that is as big rogues as any English. Me cousin Mikkelo an' me-self—I tell ye, he has the eye for the racers."

Watson said "indeed" slowly.

"The missus lets me off for Cara reg'lar. Lasht time I med five shillen. There isn't a horse he does not know. He was talkin' of the Red Fancy only last February; but he is likely to fall, says Mikkelo, says he, and ye see he knew. He heard for a fact that he was no lepper. Ye wouldn't be comparin' Ireland to this, surely."

"I—would—not," observed the trainer. "A lot of fourth-rate animals, all out to run crooked. Pah! And . . . ah! . . . this My Keelo?"

"Mikkelo," corrected Delia. "He is a scholar, he writes to me."

"You would really like," said Watson, "to live in an Irish cabin, Miss Flaherty, and keep pigs? I understand pigs are always kept."

Delia's face lighted up. "If I breathed the worrd to Miss Mellicum," she said, "wouldn't they be great here for the bran and oats that's left, that she begrudges, an'

spare sthables in plenty." Watson groaned. "I'm countin' the hours, Misther Watson, till I see a land that isn't all orther agin. I declare the very grass has the law on its mind over here. If ye but saw Ireland," she repeated wistfully. "Maybe there isn't posies on the walls an' bricks, but there's life."

Mr. Watson said "also pigs and boys," gloomily. He saw Delia to the gate, and remembering the eggs, asked her if she would have them.

To which Delia replied briefly, "Eggs, where are ye?"—an' was it likely she was to say she was asked down to see the horses and pick roses off the walls.

Watson suddenly remembered an urgent message for Sandy; he walked with Delia to the Priory. Nora sitting in the garden saw the two pass in.

"We shall get these horses to Ireland yet," she said to Sandy.

Sandy shook his head. His stewardship would not weigh heavily upon him then. He could not think of it. Leave Northlap, with its electric light, hot water, its sheds and cottages! Was Nora crazy to dream of Watson ever consenting, ever agreeing, of any one giving consent?

"Watson may want to go. Wait and see," said Nora.

Things went on after the funeral with the smoothness of a rock rolling down a steep mountain. Hildebrand and Araminta made up their minds to sulk and fight with each other. Their injuries, when they began to nurse them, grew huger than ever. They decided mutually that it was a plot, and then fought with each other because it was so. The only time they agreed was when they wished to annoy any one else, or in their rooted dislike to having the Aclands at Northlap.

Araminta urged the joys of Ireland upon Nora, and talked of a cousin, Mrs. Hannyside, who would come to play propriety. Mrs. Acland's denseness was almost curious. She never saw anything.

"A worthy lady who would be glad of free living here," said Araminta coldly. "It is really cruel to keep you away from home, Mrs. Acland."

"Sandy," said Nora sweetly, "must stay with the horses wherever they are. Of course, if we could take them to Ireland, we could go and leave you here."

Here Miss Mellicombe wondered snappily why a rich man should crave for a few pounds, and she rang the bell to know what the cook had done with the remains of the cold beef.

"Mrs. Acland's dog, madam," said Marston urbanely, "happened to notice it on the table."

"He loves beef," said Nora absently. "I think it's because we whipped him for hunting sheep."

To fling oneself daily against the sharp edges of a cliff was Araminta's mental attitude. Northlap was to be kept up until everything was settled. The bills were paid by Mr. Allenbury, and the cook declined economy. She was blandly humble to Araminta, and she economised at times. Phillips brought a special dish in for his master and mistress's breakfast, and watched with some pleasure Mr. Hannyside's effort with fried hock of bacon.

"They will drive me crazy," Nora remarked more than once. "Araminta went to the greenhouses directing that the stovehouses should not be kept heated; and now Mr. Allenbury is replacing all the dead plants, and Hildebrand is raging wildly."

The arrival of the Acland children did not increase the harmony. Alexander brought two rabbits, a dormouse, and a guinea pig, which nothing would part him from; Kathleen a Persian cat and a canary. The rabbits having been placed on a secluded plot near the library window, escaped with extreme persistence, and the appearance of the largest white one at luncheon sitting on the salad was almost too much for Araminta's nerves.

Kathleen was pleased to take a fancy to Hildebrand and

to haunt the "nice fatty man" with a persistence which all but drove him crazy. She swarmed upon his knee when her shoes were muddy, she petted him with sticky fingers and said he was very like the Dook.

This remark, made before Hildebrand had found how wearing a child's friendship can be, made him smile pleasantly and ask what Duke?

"It's her fat Iceland pony," said Nora, "the pale yellow one." Hildebrand put back the penny he had nearly parted with, and he snorted haughtily.

Neither cousin would leave the other alone at Northlap to work havoc with the place. Hildebrand advised Araminta to listen to the dictates of her conscience, and Araminta tried to work Hildebrand up to resigning, and both fully intended to see the matter out. With a meek married cousin to bully they felt that life might be endured—the presence of Sandy and his wife was an enduring blister to their raw nerves.

There was one particularly stormy quarrel when Nora and Sandy were going out to luncheon. Araminta countermanded cutlets and other things and Hildebrand brought in three friends who had called, the presence of one piece of dry salt beef gracing the table.

"Mrs. Peters sent *us* mutting," said Alexander, telling the tale, "hot, with tattos on plates, but she said she had nothings more, an' so we waited till the peoples etted bread an' butter, an' dear Hildy looked like Barney when he wants to bite." Barney was a beloved hairy cur, reluctantly left behind at Castleknock.

Sandy yearned for his home with a yearning which grew deeper hourly. Nora was cheery with the cheeriness of one who endures the present because there are hopes for the future. She often pitied Hildebrand because he could not keep his stud in Ireland, where the climate would soon produce a winner.

"If we had them at Castleknock now," said Nora, 'Sandy and I could go back there and you two could stay

on here until the race was won. There's the upper yard, you know, big enough for fifty horses, and there hay and oats are so cheap—you'd save in the end."

"Master Acland's rabbits," announced an under-gardener at the window, "have got loose and eaten up a bed of carnations."

"They love carnations," said Nora absently. "Alexander, why did you let them out? Kathleen, don't climb on Hildebrand's knee, he doesn't like it. No, he won't give you a ride." Kathleen merely murmured darlin' Hildy and kissed her tortured friend with a mouth sticky from strawberry juice.

"It would all fit in so beautifully," said Nora cheerily. "If we could ever manage it. What's that, Araminta, my children are absolutely spoilt? They're not really at home, but there are so many things they are not to do here, and of course they do them, and it's Hildebrand's likeness to that pony. Kathleen brought it up and loves it."

Mr. Watson was no happier in his yards. He was never free from worrying visits, from criticisms and overseeing. Hildebrand went through accounts and groaned over them, and ordered in oil and liniments and flaxseed from cheap wholesale dealers without consulting Sandy, and then raved because he had to pay for them himself. He wished to know why Red Fancy and Pop-Gun could not live on hay until a few months before the race.

"So you wouldn't like to live in England," said Watson one day to Delia.

Delia looked at Mr. Watson's well-built form and shook her head.

"I wouldn't live here at all," she said briskly. "It's ordther and nateness everywhere. I tell now, there was a gran' clutch of little chickens above all droopy in a hot run, an' I did but carry them to a corner of the gardin to get flies and wurrms, and presently out comes one of the young men eager to say they scratched up a whole bed of turnips, that I knew he could set agin in five minnites. He was all

for complainin' me to the head man, but—" Delia paused "He was a dacent bye in his heart," she finished thoughtfully, with a blush.

"Which under-gardener," said Mr. Watson through clenched teeth, "and what did he say?"

"That he'd let me off," said Delia, "if—well—like me cousin Danny when I let go his pony an' she ran off and lost the night's milk."

Watson said he thought the cousin was Mikkelo.

"An' is it trustin' to one cousin ye'd have me be," observed Delia, "with me mother one of fourteen? But praises be, we are off back to Ireland soon, an' Marty. . ."

"Marty?" said Watson.

"That is a cousin by marriage. Marty and Mikkelo is to take me to Cara races. They wrote an . . ."

"What shall I do," said Watson, suddenly tragic, "without Mr. Acland? They'll counter-order. They'll ruin my 'osses. They'll destroy the stud. It's not true you're going?"

"Bring the horses along with us so," suggested Delia. "God save us, the missus! And I that should be mindin' a skhirt she tore."

Mrs. Acland did not appear to remember the skirt. She smiled at Delia. She listened to Watson's wild appeals in silence.

"But we cannot always stay here," said Sandy, "and I'll see there is enough money, and. . ."

Watson sat down almost in tears. He wished to know what could be done. His nerves were giving way. He was getting thin. He was hampered and badgered at every turn. Necessary things were counter-ordered. Hildebrand refused to enter any horses for any race.

And then as if it had only just dawned upon her, as if Watson himself had suggested the idea, Nora also sat down and sketched a plan.

A few pounds. Putty, paint, new boards and the old upper yard would be ready at Castleknock. There was

a glorious gallop. Watson would be free from worries. Young horses would grow there as they never did in England.

As Watson gasped out "Why, wot, take my 'osses to Ireland," and, reeling, put out his hands to clutch the nearest support, which happened to be Delia's plump shoulder, Nora got up, observing blandly that she had only wanted to help. If it could be done. Mr. Acland would agree, he was not happy at Northlap. "And you go to pack, Delia," said Nora carelessly. "Did you hear that Mikkelo has come in for fifty pounds?" Watson looked at Delia gloomily.

"People would no doubt marry on that in Ireland," he remarked contemptuously, "an' think it riches."

Mrs. Acland replied that Mikkelo was a good, steady youth, and would make an excellent husband; the fifty pounds would probably be lost racing. Then she turned to go. Watson stood stroking his clean-shaven lip. Leave Northlap. Take his precious charges to strange bad stables. But peace, liberty were precious things.

"If you, you see," observed Nora, over her shoulder, "say the gallop is bad here and the horses do not thrive, there is a reason straight away."

"Can't be done," murmured Watson.

"You think of it all yourself, and then make it come from him," said Sandy.

"But, of course, I always meant to do that," said Nora quietly.

The Aclands returned to Northlap to find their charges in a particularly aggressive humour. Sandy with cunning, which his wife applauded silently, cheered them up by telling them how bad the Northlap gallop was; how nothing would change its stickiness in wet weather or brick-like hardness in dry; how, so far as he could see, on that account alone the horses would never be got fit. Hildebrand fidgeted savagely as he listened. The vista of unending years rolled before him in maddening array.

Mr. Hildebrand Hannyside's Red Fancy. Mr. Hildebrand Hannyside's something else. The useless wasting of his money, or comparative poverty if he gave it all up. "But what then is to be done?" almost wailed Hildebrand, while Araminta murmured "plots and plotters" to the flower-filled fireplace.

Then Sandy spoke of Ireland. Once the horses were there there would be some chance. "And I should be with them," said Sandy. "You could live here, the place is kept up. Mr. Allenbury is coming to dinner. Talk to him."

Nora broke in with her description of yard and stables; with glowing whispers of oats and hay bought for nothing. Of the cheapness of Irish boys if the English youths refused to move. We would mend the stables ourselves," said Nora, "remember that, and merely charge rent for them."

Mr. Allenbury listened with attention. He was weary of strife. When Araminta remarked that it was only another plot, he promptly became an advocate for the move. "But, Watson," he said. "Never."

"Mr. Watson, sir," said Phillips, "has come up to see Mr. Acland privately."

"Which includes Mrs. Acland," said Nora, following Sandy.

The corridor leading to the library was thickly carpeted. Going along it they heard Delia's voice raised shrilly.

"The grandest place ever ye clapped eyes on, lofts ye'd losht in, high and dhry be with lashings of air through the flures. An' sthables, I tell ye. Wasn't the missus's grandpapa Masther of the Hunt? An Mikkelo says—God save us the missus!" finished Delia, flying out a far door.

Watson was pale with emotion. A collection of drugs from Northlap had been counter-ordered by Hildebrand, who had sent his own purchases over. A foal was ill, a horse waited dosing, and Mr. Watson said no one could

stand it. "If I 'ave to do it without 'elp," babbled Watson, dropping h's in his haste. "Well, I can't, that's all. An' I wouldn't please them to leave," he said grimly. "I beg of you to stay here, sir," entreated the trainer earnestly.

"Cross to Ireland and see Castleknock," said Nora softly.

Mr. Watson wiped his hot forehead.

"Come and see," said Nora. "You could look after Delia, Watson; she sails badly."

Sandy remarked "bad sailor" to himself.

Araminta knocked loudly at the door. "We wish to know, Mr. Acland, if Watson has given notice, because I know of an excellent man who would come for a pound a week, and who trained two horses for a point-to-point." Watson gritted his teeth.

"And, *may* we not come in, the door is bolted? Hildebrand has just got an expensive parcel of drugs which he purchased returned by a stable-boy with most of the bottles broken."

Watson cheered up visibly. "And Hildebrand is going over quite early to tell that Watson what he thinks. May I not come in?"

"Not just yet," said Sandy, eyeing Watson's purpling visage. "No; Watson is not leaving, Araminta, and if he did you'd have to marry Hildebrand in desperation, and you'd never win the race. But we have been talking things over."

"Is Watson there?" said Hildebrand.

Nora pointed to the second door of the library. "He is not," she said sweetly as the trainer went out, and a subdued giggle sounded from the passage.

"They'd kill me," said the gloomy voice of Watson outside.

"To get back to Castleknock," said Sandy later on, "and to fulfil old Reggie's wishes, Nora, it's like a fairy tale."

"I trusted to Delia from the first," said Nora composedly.

"To Delia?" said Sandy blankly.

CHAPTER VII

Are all things well, according as I gave directions?

—*Henry VI.*

WATSON remarked, irritably, that he did not see how the thing was possible. "It would take months," he groaned.

"God save ye," said Delia, appearing through the old gate. "Wait till Con Dayly and Mikkelo is done with the tar and the whitewash."

Mr. Watson sat down upon the old pump trough—the trough which had once received a bailiff in its chill embrace. Con Dayly and Mikkelo were actively engaged with whitewash and buckets of tar. The carpenter from the village whistled a cheery song as he moved about and took observations. There was grass growing up between the paving stones; the roofs were not innocent of leaks in places; the walls had shed a stone or two here and there which had not been replaced.

"Fine place," said Phillips, appearing with the bridle of a three-year colt over his arm. "Nice 'oss this, Mr. Watson."

Watson, rising with dignity, replied that the applications of tar and whitewash might be discontinued, also the casual hammering in of tacks, for his horses should not come to catch their deaths in such tumble-down places. He merely looked at the horse with frigid criticism.

"Lofts in excellent order," said Phillips. "Excellent. Never having been in Ireland before, Mr. Watson, no idea what several brushes and a hammer are capable of. Don't decide in haste, Mr. Watson."

Delia chimed in with the remark that the outside would

be gleamin' for all the world like the dribbled snow before you could wink.

"Me own cousin bein' at it," added Delia, taking her pretty self close to the whitewash bucket and ordering Mikkelo not to be splashin' her.

Mr. Watson eyed these two gloomily.

After some giggling, Mikkelo, appearing to find indoor whitewashing more to his taste, and help necessary, disappeared into one of the stables, Delia coquettishly carrying the brush, and, judging from the "have dones" and "give overs" which rang through the doorway, work was somewhat desultory.

"The h'insides," shouted Watson suddenly in a loud voice, advancing stiffly.

A white shower fell upon Watson's face, spattering him badly; with several snowy dabs implanted on a complexion flushed to poppy red, he called out warning.

Delia, appearing with the brush, said, "Laws, now, Mr. Watson," modestly.

"The h'insides," called out Watson, "of my *stables* need not be like that. God bless me, man, do you wish to make the walls glaring white?"

Mikkelo removed his cap to think it over carefully. He then replaced the cap and said "Begonnes, 'twas the only white colour he ever see in the lime without ye'd tint it," and he dealt a hearty splash to the wall.

"God save us," put in Dan the carpenter; "couldn't ye lave the lick of tar, Con, till I had the measure med for the new boards? I have the three bits of string now, ache one above the other, and if I moves one box along I'll be mixin' it up in me head."

"Do you not write your measurements down?" said Watson, horrified.

"Write them down, where are ye?" responded Dan peevishly.

"Delia." He peered into the dimness. "Delia. What's yourself and Mikkelo afther?"

"I think," said Watson, turning, "that I will see the gallop . . . the prospective gallop. I may remain here."

No one could find fault with the huge fields where other chasers had been trained in days gone by.

Mikkelo, putting down his whitewash brush, promptly followed Phillips and Watson.

He explained how the minyit he'd have the taste of limewashin' over he'd see to the finces. The missus havin' been at him already.

"There's thorns galore around," said Mikkelo, "though for me meself, I'd say the furry bushes 'd make horses lift their legs more lightsome, and not be doin' damage agin they fell."

"Does he refer to the gorse?" said Watson, staring at Mikkelo. "To the gorse on top of the fences?"

Mikkelo returned the stare thoughtfully.

"I never minds to seein' one used," he said. "Is it like the whirrly gigs ye'd put up over sheds, or only to be risin'?"

Watson had pronounced the word gorse in true English fashion, dropping the "r."

"'Tis a good idea—either way," said Mikkelo, "to raise a horse in the air. A grand idea, with the goose flappin' an' quackin' an' all."

"Mr. Watson," said Phillips hastily, "is asking you if you mean gorse, not goose, not geese, Mikkelo?"

"'Tis furry bushes, I mean," said Mikkelo stoutly, "thim away on the furry hill beyond."

"He does mean gorse, then," said Watson with dignity.

"I do not—but bushes," returned Mikkelo.

Mr. Watson's only objection to the gallop was the time the fences would take to make, and he appeared to doubt the assertion of Mikkelo that they'd be sthrapped together in a hour or so.

"Barry and Quinslan can be at the cuttin'," he said, "and the ould pony won't be thinkin' of jibbin' with that load at her heels down the hill."

Nora, distinctly anxious, was in the huge lower yard when they came back. The clean smell of tar was heavy on the soft summer air, cartloads of wood, fresh barrels of lime, were being dumped down in odd corners.

Nora sent Mikkelo in to fetch her gloves, which she had forgotten, and then Delia to find them. Then she asked the trainer if things could be got ready in time.

"Not to disappoint a lady and Mr. Acland," said Watson, watching Delia disappear. "It may do, madam. If you would kindly call back the whitewasher."

"Mikkelo," said Nora, "Delia will fetch my gloves."

Heavily and with extreme dignity Watson gave Mikkelo directions. A buff tint was to be produced, to temper the snowy white, and carefully mixed.

"Is it yalley ye'd mean?" asked Mikkelo, taking up his brush.

"No, buff," said Watson; "buff."

Mikkelo mixed a fresh bucket of wash.

"There's great horses comin', isn't there, sir?" he asked. "Ye'll have the wurd here on a Sunday."

Watson observed sincerely that no doubt Mikkelo would see animals such as he had never seen.

"If ye's short of boys," suggested Mikkelo . . . "call me Mike, sir, if ye lay ye're tongue to it aisier . . . I have a nevvie that 'd match ye. He never grew, an' he can't clap his mind to anything but mischief. He should make a great boy after the races," said Mikkelo enthusiastically.

Watson said "Indeed," drily.

"There's many a wasthrel went to the stables about," said Mikkelo cheerfully, "and did as well as the rest. There must be great worry and considtheration in it all—with a horse out one day to enjoy himself, an' the next for bisness, and no one knowin' but such as yerself."

"Good gracious!" said Watson faintly, "do you imagine that we—er—that my stables runs crooked? You, Mikkelo!"

Mikkelo put the bucket inside the door without a word.

He called loudly to an unseen Con to know where their paints were that come and were never used. Then he turned slowly to the horrified Watson.

"Sure. Ye all must be sayin' that," he said kindly, lounging off across the yard. "Where, Con? In the corner of the turf-house? 'Tis but natteral for ye," said Mikkelo, as he vanished.

Mr. Watson went to the house ponderously. His dignity had been offended. The steward's old house was being got ready for him; painters and paperers worked there with leisurely energy.

Phillips was on the doorstep, putting lunch into the motor. Phillips was faintly offended by the ignoring of his colt, an animal which he had purchased himself as a yearling and which he looked upon as future winner of races.

"Mr. Acland," said Phillips, wishes to know if you will go to Knockmaroo races, Mr. Watson? If so, the small car is at our disposal."

"Anything worth seeing there?" Watson inquired.

"My young horse," replied Phillips, "will be winning there next year, the colt I was leading."

Mr. Watson replied absently that he didn't think he would care to go to trotting races; so he would stay in the yards.

The empurpling of Phillip's complexion was not relieved by what he would have liked to have said, as Mrs. Acland smothering an active laugh, was on the steps behind him.

"They are steeplechases," she said, "and Phillips's horse, you know, is quite thoroughbred—the man he bought it from told him so."

"Steeplechases in June," said Watson, "over this ground. Wot next?"

But later he went to the races. There was room for Delia in the car: she sat on the step, and the English trainer found that Miss Costello had no idea of presuming

on the quality, so that he was expected to wander outside the tiny stand among refreshment stalls laden with pigs' feet and yellow seed cake and sugar stick, to dodge the throwers at Aunt Sallies, cocoanut shies, and to forget that he was Henry Watson, head trainer at Northlap.

Delia, finding him absent-minded, tossed her head and vanished. So, being alone, Watson made gloomy entry through a narrow turnstile and said, "My 'Evens above me," with pious fervour. Horses of varied quality were being walked in a tiny enclosure which did duty for lawn and paddock and ring.

When a thundershower fell suddenly, every one who could fit in took refuge in the weighing-room, to Mr. Watson's surprise and horror. The first race was over when he met Phillips, who introduced him to some friends impressively.

"Training next year's favourite for the National," said Phillips. "What will be favourite that is—Northlap stables."

Mr. Mick Haggerty, a shifty-eyed little man in a dirty check suit, and Mr. Danny Magner, knew all about Northlap and were duly pleased to meet the trainer. They were deeply interested when they heard the horses were being brought to Ireland—even to Castleknock. They marched Watson through the paddock and insisted on treating him to a glass of fiery whisky, which made his head reel. One of them told him confidentially that Rocking Gate, the favourite for the next race, would probably not be running, so to leave him alone.

Mr. Watson looked inquiringly at the number board, which duly recorded Rocking Gate among the others. He pointed to it.

Mr. Magner smiled comprehensively. "Oh, he's startin'," he said, "but what I mean is will he be runnin'? There's days when a horse is in though he's out. Painted Cherry ought to be after winnin' if Rocking Gate is going to be an Also——"

Mr. Watson stroked his brow feverishly. "You mean," he began, scarcely following the brogue.

"Frindly," said Danny Hider, smiling softly. "'Tisn't every horse that starts that's runnin', Mr. Watson, as you knows well. When yours are out over here the flutter of an eyelid will be sufficient to a friend."

Before Mr. Watson gathered the breath to deny with fury that he ran his horses in this fashion, Mr. Wagner was gone.

Sandy tapped the trainer on the shoulder. "It is a little confusing," he said sympathetically, "but you'll get used to it. Have a bit on Rocking Gate."

"He is not running," said Watson, jerking the words from a wide open mouth, "that is, running but not going."

"Extraordinary how you people get into the know," said Sandy—"in half an hour too. Well, come and look on then."

But as they struggled towards the uncovered stand a whisper hissed into Watson's ear :

"He is out after all," and almost mechanically Watson turned and put two sovereigns on the favourite at evens.

He was only just in time ; next minute it was Here, I'll take two to one—the owner's money had gone on.

The well-laid-out little course curved outside the railings. "Steeplechases in June," said Watson, pursuing Sandy with his news.

All things, even horses out are not certainties. Rocking Gate, a big raking horse, carried his heavy burden prominently until the last fence, when a peck lost him two lengths, and Ben Barn, a little black, passed and held the lead. Mr. Watson had his first view of a really bloodthirsty fight to the tune of the uneven yells which can ring from Irish throats.

"He has him bate. He has not. Come on, Rocking Gate."

Ben Barns, jockey, a little wizened man, bore away to let Rocking Gate come on on the rails. Bore in again with

a whirling whip so hard at work that the bravest horse might have found it difficult to get his nose in front.

"My Heavens. He is deliberately keeping the other back," gasped Watson.

Sandy remarked that it was certainly not deliberately, and Ben Barn got his head home first to be promptly objected to.

"Howld yer ticket ; he might need it yet," counselled one of Watson's new friends.

"Might," said Watson with fine scorn, "Must! man."

"But what did he do," said Magner, "but punish his own horse honest? An' that bein' Marty Hefferson's own great game, the breath is like to lave him for the dinth of rage." Marty Hefferson had ridden the favourite.

"Marty says he will surely kill old Jamesey the minnit he has him outside," said Haggerty coming up. "I wouldn't say there'd be much between them, though, when it comes to handgrips."

"But . . . is no one going to lay information to the police?" gasped Watson.

"The police? Where are you?" said Magner with fine contempt. Mr. Watson began to think he really did not quite know. Some one bustled up to the waiting bookies. Pay. Pay on Ben Barn came a jubilant chorus.

"Objection dismissed," said Mr. Magner with some regret. "There'll be nothin' out of it but a few marks on Jamesey's face. Sorry, Watson. Saucy Maid," he began looking at his card.

"I am not betting, thank you!" said Watson with great dignity, moving away.

"He has a stiffness on him," remarked Haggerty, "an' he's bitther about the horse. Let ye find out, Martin, if Consy is out for the hurdle race. The right side of the English is better than the wrong, especially when they thrain horses."

"I am going outside, sir, for a time," said Watson to Sandy, "to—er—look at the course."

Outside Watson met Phillips, who was playing roulette with extreme care. Whenever silver money went on red Phillips put sixpence on black, and so forth. He possessed a sublime faith in the skill of the genial Jew who spun the wheel.

Other games where one backed a mysterious Cock and Feather, or threw pennies to hit certain squares which were invariably missed, were shown to Watson. Three-card men, surrounded by confederates, haughtily refused to take less than gold. There was witchery in their handling of the cards—with the queen always palpable; in fact a confederate used to turn the corner up, and the guileless player never noticed—until some one risked their gold piece on what appeared to be a certainty for them. It was—of loss.

"Cost me two half quids, thinkin' them softies," said Phillips sighing. "Found out they was Londoners afterwards—so I did."

The car held refreshment, liquid and otherwise. It was minded by a shambling tramp, whom Phillips remarked was a great friend of the master's. They went to lunch.

"Will he ever stick those stables, Sandy," said Neil Ievers coming up, "your English trainer? The white-wash and the tar and the patches." Sandy looked firm. He forgot racing as he poured out the sorrows connected with his travels, as he enlarged on Hildebrand and Araminta. "I'll give him every stable in the yard," said Sandy, "to keep him away from those two. Nora's building him a house like a palace, all new paint, and wall-papers that hit you in the eye; and, best of all, he's in love with Delia."

"Mr. Acland," said a majestic voice.

Sandy turned to see a portly lady of middle age, magnificently dressed, with gold lorgnette held up as a mark of importance. She was attended by a meek-looking youth of about twenty-five, and a second young fellow, perhaps a year or two older, with nondescript

features and impressive bright blue eyes. Dermot Butler was supposed to be exceedingly handsome. He went to London with his mamma twice a year, and was careful to wear the latest fashion in ties, coats, and hats. Dennis, his stepbrother, found it a struggle to get Hasset the tailor to give him credit for a new suit once a year ; even that was only procured by extreme diplomacy, and perhaps a payment of three pounds on account.

Dennis's mother had died when he was born, and Mr. Butler's second wife did not waste any of her large income on the unwanted stepchild. He was in her eyes an idler and a ne'er-do-well. He had failed for the Army, facing the "exam" from a cheap school which had never before sent up a candidate direct. He had declined to enter a bank ; so he existed now in a corner of Knockary Castle, farming a little piece of the place which had been left him by an uncle. Dennis's farming was always full of golden hopes, but the buying of the sheep which could not fail to make money, was put off when he saw a four-year-old which must be worth three hundred—and which wasn't when it went wrong in the wind. His hunters used to jump into his meadow, and then he wouldn't turn them out because they looked so happy. Farming languished, but Dennis was undepressible. He rode straight and hard, and he possessed a sense of humour which was his stepmother's especial cross.

"Mr. Acland," said Mrs. Butler, "there is a young person. . . . She gave the message to Dennis, but I proposed to deliver it myself. A Miss Knox—governess to my nieces, Daisy and Maud ; she says she wishes to speak to you."

Sandy said "Where?" excitedly, and looked for Nora.

"Mr. Butler understood, confidentially, that this young person had had expectations—and been disappointed. Connected with the estate you have been over about," said the great lady condescendingly. "She seemed quite put out the other morning at some business arrangement."

"She might well be," said Acland briskly. He looked at Dermot Butler, and he forbore to even hint that Molly's prospects might improve; for the youth wore a somewhat distressed air, as if he were in enforced captivity.

"A pushing young person," said Edith Butler. "I have suggested changing her to my sister. She would be quite good looking if she were tidy," she added magnanimously. "But the children are foolishly attached, and my sister Netta is a fool."

"She's out in the wagonette," said Dennis; "the kiddies begged to come and see the jumping. No, Dermot, you needn't show the way."

"You certainly need not, Dermot," said Mrs. Butler acidly.

"I can," said Dennis. "You back horses instead."

"We will put on ten shillings between us, Dermot," said Dermot's mother, eyeing the sulky aspect of a perfectly tailored back and sleek head.

"Ten shillings, Dermot, on anything you fancy. You racing men find out so much," added Mrs. Butler splendidly.

Dermot vanished reluctantly into the seething crowd. Mrs. Butler made majestic way to talk to Mrs. Ievers, mother-in-law of Nora's sister. Standish Blundell, looking at them as they passed, murmured something concerning double harness to Sandy and Kathleen.

"Perfectly matched silken coats; a trifle bad humoured," said Standish. "Auburn manes and——"

"That will do, Standish," said Kathleen severely. "One is my mother-in-law."

"Faith, that wasn't her fault," said Standish, rending the air with one of his brays of laughter. "If you want Nora, Sandy, she's coaxing old Ned Hennessy to tell her if Saucy Lass is on the job for the next race; and he's as deaf as a post. You get on. It's down near the winning post. I'll find Mrs. Acland."

He met Nora flying past with two five-shilling pieces displayed in her hand.

"He says what'll bate him'll win, Dennis," she cried, "and it's four to one."

"At this rate we shall be millionaires," said Dennis, extracting half a crown.

Nora dived through the crowd agilely when she heard Miss Knox was there. They struggled through the now massing people, and the race had begun when they got a little clear.

"She's a real nice little girl," said Dennis. "There's the wagonette now and—" Dennis remarked that he was blest, in a tone which lacked joy.

He paused and looked again.

Miss Knox, waving wildly, was standing on the seat of the carriage. A slim young man in perfectly cut, grey clothes on one side, and on the other the short form of Mr. Alexander Acland. To keep the balance and give each other support it was apparently necessary for the two men to pass their arms behind Molly's back, and her hands grabbed firm at their shoulders.

Two little girls, chiefly conspicuous for long hair and legs occupied the remaining space.

"It's . . . Dermot!" said Dennis weakly. "If mother saw him."

"She does," said Nora breathlessly. "She does see."

It was at this point that Nora lost control of herself and sat down to laugh upon anything she could find. It happened to be a low stall laden with sugar sticks and buns. Newspaper coverings guarded the wares from the sunshine, and the boy supposed to mind it was cheering the horses to victory.

Support was required. The space behind the wagonette was now almost clear of the crowds, so that Mrs. Butler, who had missed her son and come to look for him accompanied by her friend Mrs. Ievers, had a clear view of his present position. Nora and Dennis were near enough to hear the excited comments from the occupants of the wagonette.

"He's down," yelled Sandy, "Dermot's Bay is down."

"Saucy Lass," shrieked the crowd. "Come on, Saucy Lass."

High above the din rose a girl's clear voice.

"I've got two shillings on her—oh—hurry, Saucy Lass."

The three swayed and danced upon the narrow seat, Mr. Dermot Butler joining in the wild excitement—for at the last hurdle with all the horses in a bunch—Ragmour, the leader, an awkward oversized four-year-old, swerved, refused, and then, jumping sideways, threw two horses over with a crash, unshipped his jockey and bolted himself, straight for the crowd, which eddied and surged and waved hats as he came.

The immediate result was the retreat upon the wagonette of a black mass of people, with a force which reft the quiet vehicle from its support and rolled it slightly backwards, and the consequent backward drive, with three simultaneous yells of Sandy, Mollie Knox, and Dermot Butler over the children and the lunch.

A great many pairs of boots seemed to be doing active boxing matches with the air, and something sweet and liquid was oozing over the cushions when Mrs. Butler stood still to gaze in horror.

For a moment she was engulfed by the crowd as they sped for safety, her plumed hat standing with rock-like firmness above the ruck.

"My—my heavens—and . . . even underneath," gasped the irate lady.

Now, Mr. Watson and Phillips had also been on the fringe of the crowd watching the race. Ragmour elected to charge straight in their direction, so that Watson found himself carried away straw-like in the first rush, and then making for safety with feverish haste. The wagonette was straight before him—he dived under it at the same moment as Eliza Magee, an old and not oversober orange woman, the meeting upsetting the basket of yellow fruit

in all directions. Phillips took more discreet cover at the back of the carriage.

"I shall die," said Nora weakly, "die! Look at Watson now, and the oranges. Oh, come over closer."

Watson was scrambling among a shower of oranges and endeavouring to get out, for Eliza Magee showed distinct symptoms of embracing him.

The sympathetic murmurs of the crowd arose.

"Is it dead ye are in there, Mrs. Magee, ma'am—dead an' thrampled?"

"Thanks be to God above an' the inside cyar, I am not, Patsy. But there is not a bone in me body that is not black an' blue. Is he cot?"

"He is not," said some one, "he is loose sthills an' the two hindmost heels ov him like a whirrwind. Jabbers! There he is agin. Have a care. Sthop the vilyin."

Watson, terrified by Eliza, dashed out under the step. He was caught in a new rush and flung against the haughtily firm support of Mrs. Butler, to which he clung confusedly, crying on his English gods.

"Watson!" said a voice.

"Old Hannyside's trainer. Here, and look. Good gracious."

Mr. Watson looked up to see Mr. Hilyard, an English owner, passing by to his car. He felt his cup was growing full.

"Watson!" said Hilyard, passing on. "I thought he was such a steady fellow too. Left in charge, now poor Hannyside's gone, and look at him."

"Darlin', to ye, let Mrs. Butler go, an' give me a hand out," shrilled Eliza the orange woman. Mr. Watson opened his mouth and shut it without emitting any sounds. He looked at Phillips, who was gravely inspecting the sky.

"God save ye," said Eliza, coming to the perpendicular by the aid of the trainer's coat tails. "If there's a thirst on ye there's oranges an' plenty on the ground, an' ye're welcome."

"I—shall die," repeated Nora.

Amid it all something was winning. Saucy Lass's name was being shouted to the skies.

"He has her bate. She was knocked. She will do it yet." A last roar followed by silence.

"Dermot," said Mrs. Butler in awful tones, to her son's patent leather boots.

Three ruffled heads replaced the various boots; one of them hatless, but distractingly curly.

"Oh, what a shame to push us, and did Saucy Lass win?" said Mollie, clinging to the nearest support, which happened to be Dermot's neck.

"Dermot!" said Mrs. Butler again. And then in icy tones, "I presume the winner of the race is of more importance than your charges, Miss Knox."

"Daisy and Maud, are you dead?" asked Mollie anxiously.

Daisy and Maud came contemptuously from under the body of the wagonette.

"We just got out when we saw them coming. We weren't Silly Bills," said Maud loftily. "And oh, Auntie, Dermot fell into my ginger beer."

Dermot had compassed this fact, and he had also failed to miss the jam tarts. The shoulders of his grey coat were adorned with spots of yellow apricot jam, and were damped with ginger beer. A large blob of tart adhered to his straw hat.

"I have never," blazed his mother, "seen such a disgraceful exhibition. I am surprised at *you*, Mr. Acland. Most surprised."

Sandy, descending slowly, said they had not been able to account for a loose horse.

"She—she—had her arms round their necks," gasped Nora. "Round Dermot's neck, Dennis. Come on."

Dermot's merriment grew a little faint suddenly.

Eliza, who had taken refuge under the wagonette, stopped to pick up the fruit that was lost and spilled on her.

"To search for you everywhere, and to find you here," said Mrs. Butler, breathing hard. "Oh, my heavens!" For at that moment, Ragmour, weary of being chased, came thundering up, and brought himself to an abrupt anchor, with his chest against the wheels and his terrified head poised over Mrs. Butler's hat.

Dennis took the bridle and held the horse as he remarked that Dermot would do for a lunch table if he went down on his knees. Mrs. Butler, ordering the guilty Ragmour to be held away from her, did repairs with a pocket handkerchief, greatly troubled by the officious help of Mrs. Magee, the orange woman, who assisted on the other side with what might have been a duster or a dish cloth.

"If it had only not been the ginger beer," said Dermot, peering over at his shoulders. "Go away—woman."

"Will I be puttin' thim tarts back for ye to ate, sir, or will I give thim to the craythers here?" said Mrs. Magee unabashed. "The one that stuck to ye're hat is as clane as it came out of the oven. Will ye have it, lovey," she said, holding out the remnant of a tart to Daisy, "seeing all that's spiled on ye?"

"But what did win?" said Miss Knox, readjusting her blue hat. "Oh, what did win?"

Sandy examined the board through his glasses and was able to give Saucy Lass's number. "Failing objections," he said, "there will be at least a dozen."

"Then you run and get my money," said Mollie to Dermot quickly. "You put it on."

Mrs. Butler gasped audibly. A governess—a mere paid dependent—was speaking in this fashion to her son and heir. This was a young person who must go.

"Mr. Dermot Butler," she said, "will be escorting me back, Miss Knox, and I fear cannot return with your winnings."

"It will be heaps of time when he's seen you in," said Mollie politely. "There is just a little salad in your pocket, Mr. Butler."

Mollie became absorbed in a meeting with Nora. It was very difficult to her to remember her position and to speak with the meekness due to it. She stood talking eagerly, asking many questions about her distant cousins, laughing unrestrainedly over their adventures.

"We don't know why he—Mr. Hannyside—did it?" said Sandy.

Mollie laughed a little dismally. "He promised to leave me independent," she said, "but—one never knows. Here, if they get tired of waiting, am I, prospective heiress of a racing stud. I'd rather not tell any one," she added. "Not here," she laughed again. "A dividend for two pounds arrived this morning," she went on. "My allowance is to be paid monthly through Mr. Allenbury. Araminta explained that anything further might make me idle."

Mollie listened eagerly when she heard the racers were coming to Ireland. Slipping a little away from the children, she told Nora that she was quite happy at Bally Dermot. "But she, Mrs. Butler, doesn't like me," said Mollie dolefully. "She comes stalking along and says, 'I trust you are attending to your duties, Miss Knox,' when we are taking lessons in construction by making flagger boats to sail on the lake."

Nora looked thoughtfully and somewhat impressively at Dennis Butler, who was removing broken glass from the sandwiches.

"He boats a lot there," said Mollie, "and the other too—Dermot—but Dermot can't pull well."

"Miss Knox," said Nora to Sandy, as they went back to their motor, "will not stay long at Bally Dermot. Come, Dennis."

Nora had arranged a day for the children to come to lunch. She mentioned it as they got to the car, and showed no surprise when five minutes later Dennis Butler remembered that he had a four-year-old he must show to her, and guilelessly suggested Thursday, as he knew she would be in.

"Has Dermot," said Mrs. Acland dryly, taking tea from a Thermos, "got a three-year-old?"

"He. Why?" said Dennis blankly.

"He will probably find one on that day," said Nora, looking fixedly at the sky.

They drove away placidly, looking at the last race from the road, but Mr. Watson's sorely tried nerves were again stretched to breaking point.

Phillips's selection getting first past the post, he waited to be paid, and the good-humoured, somewhat drunken crowd surged in uneven waves across his path when he wound up the little car. The start was further delayed by Mrs. Magee, who had bathed her bruises in fiery spirit, and now sat upon the step demanding a lift in tones of unruffled good humour.

Watson's demands for the aid of the law were put aside in a manner which puzzled and enraged him.

"If ye will not let me sit, carry me," said Mrs. Magee gaily. "Carry me to the station-house—Englishman dear."

"With her own ass waitin' on her be the gate," said a voice. "Kilt ye'll be, Eliza, swepin' through the air. Let ye light down, woman."

Whisky had developed obstinacy. Mrs. Magee sat on and chuckled. She proffered bruised oranges—at a reduction to the maddened Mr. Watson.

"Suck one—'twill sweetin' ye," she said blandly. "The sorra a sthir I'll sthir. Two a penny now to ye're darlin' self."

When Phillips swung the car and raced the engine noisily Mrs. Magee said there was magic in it.

"Singin' an splutterin' inside," she said, "robbin' honest carmen of their dues. Dhrive on, Mr. Phillips."

Mr. Watson sat in stony silence as the car bumped its way to the gates. Delia clung outside the stepney to the other dashboard. Mrs. Magee sat blandly flinging witty remarks to those who walked. They made a slow and

much-cheered progress to the gates. Eliza giving loud and graphic details of how herself and the Englishman had met familiar under the wagonette—"and with the love that's in him he won't let me from his car now"—cried Eliza coyly to the crowd.

A big yellow car nosed past them. Mr. Watson saw that Mr. Hilyard was driving.

"My character is gone for ever," said Watson gloomily. "If I ever want a job I have no chance of getting one. Shall we have to take her home," he added; he almost yelped, "I cannot . . . Hi! there, policeman. This drunken woman."

"Let that one be . . . he is courtin' me dather," said Eliza Magee happily. "God save ye, Misther Phillips, that brought me to the ass when I couldn't thrust me own good legs. Darlin' to yerself," she added, lurching off the step and placing three oranges in the brim of Mr. Watson's felt hat. "When ye're own head is reelin', maybe old Anna Eliza might be comin' along with the ass one day."

"Why did you not give her in charge?" snorted Mr. Watson. "Oh Heaven, what a country."

"But—— Out of the way you, Tim Flanerty," said Phillips. "If I were to kill you I have two witnesses to prove you were drunk. No use your coming up to say you weren't. But," went on Phillips, "she lives close to our place, decent old person, Mr. Watson; impossible to be severe on the poor."

"Is it to arrest her ye would?" flashed Delia from the step. "A nice jailful you'd have to-night if you took every poor thing that asked for a drive."

Mr. Watson thought, as they nosed and twisted past the crowd, that his horse would not leave Northlap after all.

"With all the limewash and the tar and all," said Delia sadly. "And my cousin Mikkelo half idle except for jobs about the house if ye give it up. . . ."

"Is your cousin—er—Mikkelo—a well-to-do person," asked Watson irrelevantly and snappily.

"He is one of eight, but he has a pig below," said Delia, "an' when the old aunt that kapes house for him goes, they're hopin' she has a stockin'."

"That is—savings," explained Phillips, and Watson grunted.

It was a surprise on their return to find the stable destined to Red Fancy painted a lovely rose colour. The word "buff" had been outside Mikkelo's comprehension, and he said he thought the colour'd match the horse's name.

"Dandy and bright," said Mikkelo in injured tones. "Dandy an' bright, Mishter Watson, to hearten a horse an' he downhearted afther losin' his race."

Watson went heavily to Phillips's house. He felt that words were inadequate.

CHAPTER VIII

Beauty doth varnish age, as if new born.

—*Love's Labour Lost.*

EVEN licks of paint and whitewash and patches of wood take time to apply. The preparing of the new stables drifted over a busy month. The rearing of the fences was a prolonged task. Both would have been got through in shorter space if Mikkelo had not suffered from perpetual fears that them ejits outside'd be puttin' up the furry bushes wrong, and laid aside paint pots to rush off to give advice, and if Con Dayly had not strolled in just as often to say that he was waitin' on a new load of bushes outside, an' come to see the ways the paintin' was.

Sometimes Sandy feared a hitch might arise, and the horror of Northlap and his charges fall on him again. But Watson wrote briefly without hinting of change in his resolution. He ran over often to groan at bits of wood "sthrapped" airily over holes, and to reject the old "matterass" with which the carpenter had stopped one hole in the loft, the "wood bein' out on him and the ould thing going to waste in an outhouse."

"The heart in some people might be broke with their fancies," said Mikkelo contemptuously. "If you met the eye the thrainer threw on me, and I but to say how handy the great big crusher 'd be in the winther when ye were in a hurry to feed the cows. And the big boiler, says I; there's many a night the pigs below has to wait. If ye met it, the look," said Mikkelo, "I declare 'twould hole iron, 'twas that fierce. These yards will be *locked*, Mikkelo, says he, and no use is to be made of anything in here, says he—for your dirty cows or pigs, says he, with

horses worth a fortin', says he, in the stables. In my counthry, says he, we use milk pails for milk, says he, an' not for carryin' whitewash in, and he thrun a look at the pail I snapped from Biddy as she crossin' the yard. We use things in their proper place, says he, very grand like. God help us, 'tis terrible short ye might be often, says I, and that's the traffic of speech that was betune us. An' if I did take a loand of this pail, says I, didn't Biddy borry the paint out ov here, says I, to put a lick on the dairy door, where the dog med bits ov it with his teeth an he afther a rat."

Mollie Knox and her charges duly came to luncheon. Mollie was too brave to be sad, but sometimes her lips trembled a little and her grey eyes grew piteous.

"I thought I should have had something," she said. "I was happy in London, but I could not earn enough to keep me without help."

Sandy, touched to the point where a man's voice grows gruff, replied that Mr. Hannyside had trusted to the generosity of Hildebrand and Araminta.

"He didn't. He knew they never had any," remarked Mollie directly. "Araminta writes at least four pages each month about my allowance, and she is down at Northlap every week warning Watson to eschew extravagance. No." Mollie sighed. "He meant to do something else. People never think they are going to die; and I must not growl, I was lucky to get a nice place."

Nora looked down the avenue. Dennis Butler was riding up it on a lengthy, sidling young horse.

"When they send you away," she said firmly, "you shall come here to me."

"But why," asked Mollie blankly, "should they?"

"The horse is very hot," said Dennis's voice outside. "May I put him up?"

Nora went down the stone steps to be freely snorted over by the nervous four-year-old.

"He might be worth money," she said critically.

"He might, until he goes wrong." Dennis jumped off. "I wait to sell for one month, and out comes the curbs and swish sounds the whistle in just that month. I was never born to be rich," said Dennis, a little drearily. "They'll leave the place away from me to careful Dermot, and I shall grow old on two hundred a year, as I sit on the pile of hopes which I never stop hammering together."

But over chickens, and raspberries and cream, Dennis seemed to have forgotten sorrow. He promised his long-legged cousins how, without fail, he would take them fishing on the lake next day. He made further promises as to an excursion to some river which apparently strewn its banks with fossils. Nora looked at him expressively, but she said nothing as these plans were made.

They played tennis after luncheon, a set in which tennis balls were mysteriously lost, and took most careful hunting for in the long grass outside the wire netting.

"With that last one absolutely looking at them from the gravel," said Norah patiently. "The girl is not meant to be a governess. She shall come here," added Mrs. Acland, "when she leaves."

"If she leaves," said Sandy mildly.

"I said when," replied his wife, raising her hand at the honk of a motor-horn. "When," she repeated firmly. "Oh, yes, I knew it would be Dermot."

Dermot Butler, spotlessly neat in smoke-grey flannels, with a crimson rose starring his buttonhole, had driven Standish Blundell over to see the stables.

Standish, big and gloomy, pointed to a cane chair. "Sandy will take me over them," he said in his deep voice. "A splash of whitewash would destroy you, Dermot."

Fortunately Dermot carried shoes and racquet in his car. He explained that he did so on principle. They played a new game with a great deal of manipulation in tossing for partners, and Nora found herself engaged in a curious contest, in which Dennis slammed furious drives at

his stepbrother, and lifted lobs so gently that they almost invariably went out to Miss Knox.

Dermot removed his pearly-suited person from the net and took up a position on the back line; this change following one ball which he only saved himself from by ducking, and another which made a green smudge on his silk shirt.

"If you would play tennis instead of hitting boundaries," said Dennis icily to his step-brother.

"He turned his racquet; I saw him; he made it 'smooth' so as to play with Miss Knox," confided Dennis to Nora. Nora sighed patiently and without resentment, as she remarked that she thought she had observed the juggling.

Dennis recollected himself and blushed. He waited for the next easy ball and drove it with all his force.

Dennis, leaping for safety, bumped against his partner, sending her staggering from the court; his effort to save her brought him unsteadily in her wake, and the ball, whizzing down the path with the velocity of a bullet, met the Honourable Mrs. Butler straight upon her fairly preserved waist, placing her in a sitting position on the gravel, where her sister's governess and her son promptly fell over her.

The awful tones which announced serious injury quite failed to quell Nora's untimely laughter.

Mrs. Butler unravelled herself from the tangle to see her hostess biting tennis balls that she might not shriek, and her stepson lifting Miss Knox from the ground, as he abused Dermot for a clumsy mug.

"May I ask?" said Mrs. Butler haughtily—no one offered to help her—"if this is a game of tennis or an unseemly romp?"

"She might have been hurt," said Dermot angrily. "You might have hurt Miss Knox with your horseplay." The treble laughter of Daisy and Maud was quite unsmothered by the shrub they crouched behind.

Mrs. Butler raged upon the gravel, and it was Standish Blundell who picked her up with the deeply voiced remark that she was growing very humble in herself so low down.

Mrs. Butler explained wrathfully. Nora laid down a chewed tennis ball, and managed the grave-voiced sympathy due for quite five minutes.

Unappeased, the visitor stalked to a seat. "My sister," she said, "shall hear of this . . . game of tennis! I perceive Miss Knox's charges, hot and grimy, unnoticed while the young person amuses herself."

Mollie, unaware of offence, dusted herself as she came up.

"It was all Mr. Dennis's fault for slamming balls at nowhere," she said, "and Mr. Butler's, because he was afraid—and no—Daisy and Maud, you are not to stand upon your heads. You'll green them."

Mrs. Butler remarked glacially that she was pleased to see that Miss Knox absolutely recalled her pupils' existence.

"I had no idea," she added, "that I should find both my sons here."

"They don't play so badly either," said Mollie absently. "Oh, will you swing me, Mr. Butler? I'd love it."

"The pink room will be the best for her here," murmured Nora to the teapot.

Dermot Butler rubbed his sleeve pathetically, and his mother took tea with subdued fury in her heart. She issued stern directions as to her small nieces' meal.

"Not that chocolate cake, Daisy and Maud. Certainly not; bread and butter. Or, if there is any, sponge cake. There is not?" She looked at Nora.

"When I do have it for children there is always a tipsy cake for luncheon next day," said Nora apologetically, "and we hate it." Nora breathed the words "old cat" to Daisy in fierce aside.

"She is," said Daisy, watching Miss Knox's ineffectual endeavour to make a giggle into a frown.

"The little girls may eat plain hot cakes if they do not take too many," said Mrs. Butler heavily. "What is French for cake, Daisy and Maud?"

When Daisy absently answered Chat, her sister's sudden burst of laughter had to be concealed under the table, while Miss Knox, staring stonily over her tea-cup, felt that as the relief of diving down to hide her face was denied to her she would probably burst.

"The simplest of French words," said Mrs. Butler loftily. "May I inquire, Miss Knox, what French you impart to your pupils?"

"Daisy," said Mollie in trembling tones, "what is cake?"

"Defendu," said Daisy, burying her naughty face in her tea-cup.

Mrs. Butler said nothing; she merely looked at the shaking governess. But when Mollie had suggested the swing and Nora had whispered to the children that they would find heaps of indigestion cakes in the kitchen, Mrs. Butler turned to the hostess.

"The young person once led us to understand that she had had expectations from her cousin," she said. "He did not leave her anything?"

"Nothing," said Nora sadly.

"He . . . found her out before he died," said Mrs. Butler in awful tones. "I should like my carriage, Mrs. Acland."

As they went to ask for it they came upon a happy group near the swing. Daisy and Maud were munching jam tarts, Standish Blundell, large and grave, stood there to them, while both the Butler boys swung Miss Knox to leafy heights in the big swing.

"I am not much of a French scholar," said Standish to the children, "but I do know cake from cats, and so do . . . Lord keep us," said Standish, looking round.

Mrs. Butler passed by in icy silence.

It was the first of many visits to Castleknock from pretty

Mollie, but when this first one was ended Nora looked at Sandy.

"There will be trouble," she said. "Mrs. Butler will never allow the girl to stay with her sister. And when I have her here, as I mean to——"

"Until we see what is in that letter," said Sandy.

"I shall get heartily tired of Dermot," said Nora thoughtfully. "This place is nearer Castle Butler than Bally Dermot. Oh, Sandy! that will be going to plague us into gulfs of bothers."

"We're out of the worst one," said Sandy cheerily.

"I wonder?" observed Mrs. Acland, looking at the horizon. "There are always those beastly steamers," she added dolefully.

With all these interludes a new yard sprang into being. Shiny red doors, whitewashed walls, stables reeking cleanly of tar. Sacks of oats began to come from England. Hay was flung into the new hay barn, the great bins grew full of bran. Sandy went to Cahervalley with a list of many pages for linseed and flax seed, oil, and the countless small things which are necessary to the carefully tended horse. Then came a day when a special train—Mr. Watson insisted on it—came puffing importantly to the platform at Cara, and the chasers, hooded and swaddled and swathed, were unboxed by excited and admiring railway servants.

"Is that him? Is that Red Fancy, Denny? That is not; he is a mare. Maybe that's him above. What is the name of that one, young man? Mercy's Light? That was Tom Dayly's. I call him to mind well."

Watson, fussily dignified, was astounded to hear the performances of Mercy's Light reeled off without a mistake. It made him unbend sufficiently to point out his crack to the station-master.

"Barring accidents," said Watson grandly, "we ought to have a good chance next year."

"Accidents or the handicapper," said Crowe shrewdly.

"He is a grand med horse sure enough, what ye can see ov him."

Red Fancy had fretted on his journey. He was an excitable horse. Watson groaned as he ran his hand over the dark, wet neck.

"This means a week over before the race," he said; "a full week if we take the sea like this."

Pop-Gun, low and solid, came cool and unruffled from his box, looking round him for something to eat.

"If that fellow was only fast enough," said Sandy. "If he only was."

Mr. Watson sniffed. The long string began its journey to Castleknock with almost royal dignity. It passed through the murky purple of a thunderous afternoon—great clouds hanging on the horizon; long rumbles of thundery sound clearing the heavy air.

Con, Sandy's man, had come to show the horses the way, but as Mr. Watson insisted on waiting for his charges at every cross, the progress in the motor was not rapid.

"They saw me off," said Watson. "They did. Not with the train that is, but they were both down all the day before. Both in a pepper. They said we had no right to bring 'osses to this 'ere wilderness. They're doubtful of us, Mr. Acland, and mad to be rid of the waiting. Suppose"—Watson turned a heated face to watch for the coming string—"our 'oss *don't* win next year, sir. That it goes on as it may from year to year?"

Sandy said thoughtfully that private homes for the insane were excellently managed—"But if it does," he added, "that ten thousand must go to some one else—I'll give it up."

Mr. Watson settled down in an excellent humour. The horses fed well. He was pleased to find the gallop springy and fairly soft. Delia took a pleasing interest in Red Fancy, and came to give him his tea in his new house. An elderly lady in a plaid shawl and a blue apron showed such ability as a maker of hot bread that heavily worded

warnings concerning their weight had to be delivered to the boys.

The thunder came with flash and sulphurous gloom, battered and roared, and passed away, muttering, to leave a fresh washed earth and clear blue sky.

Morning dawned hotly and late July was with them, and the trees had lost their freshness—it was a morning full of stuffy heat.

Nora took her letters from Delia. When the postman did not wait to see the cows milked—he was unfortunately enamoured of the dairy maid—the post arrived at eight.

"Maud bein' in the four acres to-day Doherty is here to the minnit, and a puss on him as black as the thunder," confided Delia as she laid down the letters. "I have your bath filled out, ma'am."

"Sandy!" said Mrs. Acland, about half an hour later. Sandy had been up at the new stables. Since the race-horse is doomed to rise with the lark he had seen the horses at their work. "Sandy," said Mrs. Acland, "I knew it would happen." She cast a letter across the breakfast table.

Mr. Acland rescued it patiently from a dish of raspberries.

"Poor Mollie," he said when he had finished.

"She is to come here," said Nora firmly. "Here? Standish says his aunts want a companion. It's just like Standish. He'd have a pig to stay if he thought it was starving. But she's coming here."

Sandy said that he thought it was right. "Because Hannyside liked her better than either of the others," he said, "and one never knows what may turn up. If they got tired of waiting."

"There is a tallygram outside," said Delia's voice from an upstairs window. "Have done, Pepper, do not bite the bye. That Pepper," confided Delia in high staccato to a youth who was raking gravel, "has a mistaste for tallygrams."

"Telegram, sir," said Phillips coming in. "Sixpence portorage."

Sandy found sixpence with visible reluctance.

"Arriving morning mail will explain. Araminta Mellicombe."

Nora dropped a boiled egg into the butter.

"I can't have her here," she cried; "I won't," she went on almost piteously.

"She is coming," said Sandy stoically. "She is coming to look after the horses. She is coming. It is now nine and she will be here at eleven."

"Call off Pepper, Marty," wailed Delia. "The teeth of him is wathering in his head."

"Telegram, sir," said Phillips. "Sixpence to pay. Strange boy on borrowed bicycle, sir. Appears to expect something for himself, sir, and slight scratch on trouser leg due to Pepper, sir. Two telegrams, sir, too much for Pepper."

"This," said Sandy, when he had rooted out five pence and directed Phillips to find the rest, "is from Hildebrand."

"By the pricking of my thumbs," quoted Nora hysterically.

"Arrive Cahervalley, nine thirty to-night, will explain. Hildebrand Hannyside."

"The boy wishes to know, sir, if he should burn his trouser leg," said Phillips returning. "The other boy is beginning to think, sir, that he also . . ."

"Take them to the raspberry square, Phillips," said Mrs. Acland patiently. "And there are a few unripe plums. Summer is such an easy time to arrange about bites."

"Pepper," said Sandy, looking out, "costs a great deal of fruit in summer. Pepper, come here."

Pepper, an engaging Aberdeen, came to make obeisance, with liquidly innocent eyes and a lolling tongue. He drank some milk as a reward for his watchfulness, and then sat in the window to look for the next telegram.

Sandy took up the yellow pieces of paper. Shock had numbed him, but as the depths of the woe began to reveal itself, he became fluently furious. He would not have those two fighting here, making life a misery to him. Interfering, economising, fasting. This and more poured out in wrath.

"They may not come to stay so very long," said Mrs. Acland absently.

"They. Gracious!" said Sandy, "the butter is all oil and has fallen into my tea and on my clothes."

Nora thought, repentantly, that it must have been the hot egg she dropped into it in her agitation.

"This, you see, is my house," went on Nora cheerfully. "And also it is in Ireland. When you have finished those raspberries, children, and have a bad pain, don't ask me for help, it will be quite your own pain."

Nora's progeny immediately gave up eating raspberries to wonder why one should have to abstain from what one loved best in life.

"Yes, Mikkelo," said Sandy to his henchman through the window, "I'll come to the steps."

"The whitewash brush and the tar buckets is locked up above," said Mikkelo wrathfully, "and afther all I laid me hand to help them. They were too busy, if ye plaze, to find thim same for me. There *is* a dirty bucket somewheres, says one Kinnat, says he, but I am goin' to me brekfust now, says he, an' then I have bits to clane, says he. And they would not let me in to look myself, for what they has no rights to."

Sandy took up the new telephone which ran to the stables; he requested the immediate finding of the lost bucket.

"An' the brush," said Mikkelo. "An' the brush, sir."

"And the—are you there—brush," said Sandy.

"'Twas only an ornary sort of a brush," said Mikkelo. "There was no name like that on it. Will ye bawl ornary brush into the box, sir, while ye're at it?"

Sandy, with heightened colour, went on. "Hullo, what's that? Where is the brush? With the bucket, I fancy."

"No, but in a manger," said Mikkelo. "My, isn't it wondtherful to be talking up a thing like that? In a manger. Will ye call manger, sir? An' the sthick to sthir the tar, sir, an' two pots o' good paint, an' a pint of biled oil. They might be usin' ours for the horses. An'——"

"For goodness' sake let the man go in and find the things," roared Sandy into the telephone.

He had become suddenly aware of subdued laughter behind him, and turned now to see Mollie Knox's bright face peering from the doorway.

"I should like," said Mollie, "to have Hildebrand at that telephone, with Mikkelo directing him what to say."

"Go up and get all your things, Mikkelo, which you most carelessly left behind," directed Sandy irately.

"God save us! Are they sich robbers that pots and paints is not safe with them above?" said Mikkelo, vanishing hurriedly.

"In five minutes," said Sandy, "he will have got round every stable-boy he meets and have found some job which it is completely essential for him to do in that yard."

Mollie sat upon a wooden hall-chair and said dolefully that she was in disgrace.

"I only forgot a teeny little bit of time," said Miss Knox, "while Dermot Butler taught me how to use a paddle in a small punt. But I was late for the children's tea, and Mrs. Moriarty says that I must go. Mrs. Butler was on the shore when I came in. She says"—Mollie lapsed into sudden laughter—"that when she was five she could have taught the children the French for cake. And now I am dismissed." There was a tremor in Mollie's voice under its forced gaiety. Her small face looked pale and tired. "One cannot live on twenty-five pounds a year," she said. "The type-writing was never really worth anything; and I don't quite know what to do."

Nora, coming out of the dining-room, said firmly that the future was already mapped out. The pink room was ready, and Miss Knox was to occupy it. Nora explained that she wanted a lady help. The sallow-cheeked little lady who wrestled with the education of Alexander and his sister took no interest in the house. "Anyhow, you're coming to me," said Nora, putting an arm round Mollie's shoulder, and refusing to see the big tears on the girl's cheeks.

"I—didn't want to leave Ireland," gulped Miss Knox, looking steadfastly at a smudge of trees which showed darkly against the clear blue of the sky.

Nora coughed discreetly; those particular trees surrounded Castle Butler.

"I came over," Mollie explained, "I explained I had to see Mr. Acland on business. The telegrams, face upwards, lay on the hall table, the signatures plain to be read.

"Hildebrand," said Mollie, pointing, "Araminta."

The next moment she sat down again upon one of the old crested chairs.

"And they are coming here. And they hate me. And, oh, they will never go away until Red Fancy wins," said Mollie, in the throes of unseemly merriment. "You say they will, Mr. Acland; they won't, I know they won't. I guessed they meant it from Araminta's letters to me. I guessed it. Oh dear me," said Miss Knox, looking out. "Mr. Dennis Butler is coming to show you another horse."

"Or perhaps to see the racehorses," said Nora dryly. "And, Phillips, heavens! it is nearly eleven, and we have forgotten Miss Mellicombe. Phillips!"

Phillips appeared instantaneously. Phillips had ventured to order the outside car to go to Cara, the small motor requiring a new tyre, and the larger some slight adjustment. Con and the grey mare are about to start, madam," said Phillips urbanely.

"The grey mare," said Sandy. "If she doesn't lie

down she may get there and back. He has done it on purpose, Nora."

"The car will also be some hours late," said Nora cheerfully. "We will have finnan haddocks for lunch," she added. "It is Friday. Just nice plain finnan haddocks for Araminta to fast on."

Towards one o'clock a travel-worn young woman arrived, clinging bitterly to the rail of the jaunting-car. Araminta descended stiffly, calling down vengeance on the inventor of vehicles which carried one along with undefended limbs exposed to all dangers.

"We should have been here before, ma'am," apologized Con, "but the mare got lazy like, an' the young lady took a fright an' would not sit up on the cyar."

"She lay down," said Araminta stonily, "so suddenly that I fell off. It required lighted paper to make her get up."

"But she is such a dear when she does go," said Nora, patting the grey's damp neck. "Well, this is a sudden idea of yours."

Araminta apologized with some show of grace. She said she would explain all when she was rested, and that if she was a nuisance she could go on to the nearest hotel.

Miss Mellicombe, looking warily about her as if she expected to find a moonlighter under the begonias and a policeman in wait among the mignonette, walked up the high stone steps. When, having removed some dust and changed, she came down to luncheon, her attitude towards Ireland was one of complete and irritating surprise. The train had been quite fast and good, really nearly as good as some in England on cross-country journeys. There had been a breakfast which had proved eatable. "I did not perceive any of the nonsensical humour which people write about, and I was actually able to understand their curious accents."

"You did not have potatoes and cabbage for breakfast,"

said Nora, duly wrathful, "and all the people are quite ordinary and stupid, oh yes, but wait."

"Mikkelo wants to know, miss, will he carry ye big trunk up or lave it in the box-room, becose if he has to carry it up 'twon't fit round the turn of the landing," said Delia from the door.

"Then how can it if he cannot?" said Araminta snappily.

"He has it bathered with the dинth of trying," said Delia apologetically. "Himself an' Con is at it these tin minits. Mikkelo says, miss, he can do up the broke lock himself for ye."

Araminta, thundering "Fools!" fled to her much injured luggage.

"The trunk which won't go down the narrow passage does not look like a week-end visit," said Sandy thoughtfully. "Why in that room, Nora?"

"It's so cheerful," said Nora absently. "Maria's dairy is just underneath. Maria always sings when she is at work. She is particularly fond of 'Two Little Girls in Blue' and other high-class music, and her voice is soprano—she has one note in it, it is a false one."

"My new cabin trunk," said Araminta, fixing plainly expectant eyes upon Nora, "is completely ruined. And the man, he appears to be particularly foolish, merely remarks that if he hadn't thried if 'twould fit he'd never have known it wouldn't. I asked him if the house possessed no measures, and he said all thim same were in the sthables for the oats."

Nora observed placidly that if Mikkelo could not get up the box no one could, and Phillips announced luncheon; Miss Mellicombe, recovering her temper again, fell into irritating surprise. The fine old room, the silver; she really thought the pierced cake-basket was genuine.

"And pictures," said Miss Mellicombe, "which you've never had to sell. Fancy people being painted over here."

A dish of young ducks was being deftly cut up by Phillips. Kate the parlourmaid handed something in aspic. Miss Mellicombe looked round affably, until Phillips, coming to her first, proffered her a blameless and woolly finnan haddock, unveiled and unadorned.

"The only fish we could get," said Nora. "Friday, you see. I did not want you to starve."

Nora smiled with the virtuous air of the hostess who has done her best and remembered her guest's weaknesses.

Araminta put the finnan haddock to one side of her plate, and ate potatoes and spinach gloomily. Spinach at all times is wholesome, but uninteresting.

"We are so sorry we are late," said Mollie Knox, "but Watson would show us all the horses."

Sandy, who had seen Watson go to his dinner half an hour before, looked up and smiled pleasantly.

"And we—er—came back by a long way," concluded Mollie, seeing the smile. "Oh, Araminta, you have come?"

Araminta rose to deposit a steel-like peck on Mollie's cheek.

"Your charges?" said Araminta. "I trust you do not neglect them, Mollie. A governess has a position of responsibility."

"She has," said Mollie meekly, recognizing the fact that she was being put in her place.

"And even a governess with private means must not be careless," concluded Miss Mellicombe, glaring meaningly at Dennis Butler.

"Mince pies, madam?" suggested Phillips, at her elbow.

Now why mince pies should have appeared on a broiling July day was a mystery, even to Nora. She had ordered raspberry tarts. Phillips's peculiarly bland smile made her look at him suspiciously.

Araminta took cream-cheese dejectedly. She had, in fact, given up strict fasting, but she feared to say so.

After raspberries and cream her tolerance returned. She was again astounded at many things.

Taking Nora aside as they strolled in the luxuriant old-fashioned garden, Araminta made explanation.

"She could not," she said, "be away from the animal or animals on which her fate depended."

She was torn by anxiety, sleepless from strain. So she had followed the stud to Ireland; she was prepared to pay a reasonable sum for her board, but if this did not meet with Mrs. Acland's approval, no doubt there were respectable village inns.

"A room for myself and my maid," said Araminta; "simple cooking; I ask no more."

"I have got an idea," said Nora, "that Mrs. Cassidy's public, though she does take in lodgers, would not suit you. You can stay here, Araminta, as long as you want to, the house is a big one. But supposing"—Nora looked up—"supposing this National is a failure, and the next, and the next. Better marry Hildebrand and have done with it, my dear."

Shrill protestation burst from Miss Mellicombe's thin lips. Marriage with Hildebrand was impossible. A person of low church tendencies, of quick temper. And also there was the Reverend Eustace, now reconciled to matrimony with a bride who could bring so much to his church.

"Hildebrand's attachment to a Miss Grimes," snorted Araminta, "is of course nothing, but mine is implanted in my heart."

Araminta stalked ahead, her hands clasped, her eyes peering to heaven.

"Have a care ov the wasps' nest, miss," said Reidy the gardener. "Yer foot is in it."

Araminta sprang back wildly, flapping at a swarm of golden-bodied insects.

"Why," she demanded tartly, "have you not attended to destroying the pests?"

"Myself an' Mikkelo threw a kettle of wather on them but lasht week," remarked Reidy, stolidly picking peas, "an' it did but heartin them. But the masther has sinide of possum promised me whin he remembers it."

"I should discharge a gardener who did not remove such things from his garden," said Araminta, looking back furiously at old Reidy.

Mollie picked and ate raspberries as if she had not finished a plateful at luncheon.

"We shall be quite a party," said Sandy, joining them; "the car meets Hildebrand to-night, and Miss Knox comes in a fortnight."

"Meet Hildebrand!" Araminta sat down heavily on the nearest thing to her, which happened to be a sack of cabbages, "like she had, as Reidy put it, finished roostin' with the good cabbages rowlin' undther her." Araminta found voice.

"Hildebrand," she said, "coming here? Oh why?"

"He too, possibly, wishes to watch the horses," said Sandy. "I tell you, Araminta, you are fated not to be parted."

Araminta struggled among the crushed cabbages, which billowed at either side of her. She gripped her jet chain and pendent cross almost fiercely.

"You shall see that," she said grandly. "Help me up, please."

"There is not much substance in thim now, as well sit aisy," remarked Reidy, who had come to look on. "Thim same were soult to Henessys below, but ye may sit on thim now, Miss, as ye plaze—he would not take them."

Araminta, regarding Reidy's bent back icily, wished to know from his master, "if the man meant to be impertinent."

"The Irish," said Sandy, "never mean to be impertinent."

Araminta insisted on stalking through the stables. She spoke feelingly of Hildebrand's strong religious views, and

hinted that before long she might be sole owner of the Northlap stable.

"Hildebrand feels it even as I feel it," said Araminta, "but I am broader minded. Over here, he will feel it worse than ever. Oh, why is he coming?"

"I do not think," said Sandy firmly, when Araminta had left them, "that all the ten thousand pounds in the world, or even that lodge in Scotland, could be worth becoming host and hostess to those two."

"Wait and see," said Nora placidly.

CHAPTER IX

Look down, you gods,
And on this couple drop a . . . crown.
—*Tempest.*

THE meeting of the cousins was one worthy of note. When Hildebrand came into the drawing-room and saw a tall figure in jet-strewn grey, he stood with his mouth open for quite a minute.

Greetings to host and hostess were forgotten as he reproached Araminta bitterly for deception and secretiveness. *He* was obliged to come to see his stud, but a lady was driven by no such need.

Araminta retorted in kind. She remarked acidly that they were Hildebrand's horses in name only, and she meant to see that her interests were attended to. Further, she said that Hildebrand was a story-teller, as he had spoken of going straight back to Lesser Cheriton, and she at least had truthfully said that she was going to London.

It was after midnight before the wrathful cousins parted, leaving Sandy and Nora to stare at each other blankly and wonder how they could endure it.

"They waited to start before they wired, so that we could not stop them," groaned Sandy. "Nora, let me give it up."

But Nora gently reminded him of a promise given to a dead friend.

"You've got to see it through for one year, Sandy," she said; "and if luck follows us, just think of Scotland."

When Araminta, slightly peevish from listening to "Two Little Girls in Blue," for over an hour, came to breakfast next day, she found Hildebrand full of the same surprise which had consumed her.

Good trains; no foolish jokes; Ireland completely exaggerated, and so forth.

Hildebrand's explanation was with Sandy, but it amounted to practically the same as his cousin's. It was his duty to be near the horses which he practically owned.

As Mr. Acland had chosen to move them to Ireland he must to a certain extent take the consequences.

Hildebrand proffered himself as a second paying guest; he suggested two pounds per week as ample.

Sandy nodded unhappily, the peace of his house was passing from him.

"Why don't you marry Araminta?" he said wearily.

Araminta's protesting utterances were mild before her cousin's. She was half a Catholic—a faster—an observer of ceremonies—a singer of chants—this to a man who prayed from his heart without a book and trusted for melody to a simple tuning fork.

"Also, my affections are engaged," said Hildebrand loftily. "Miss Grimes holds them in her hands."

"But I thought once her father had seen you reading the *Pink 'Un*," said Sandy gravely, "and now you've a training-stable."

"Mr. Grimes," said Hildebrand, "recognizes the case. Money is always a necessity in married life. Greater Bethel calls for a new meeting-house. He understands."

"The Moye races, sir," said Mikkelo, appearing suddenly, armed with a pot of paint in one hand and a spade in the other, "is on to-day. An' Clanchy's black mare is sure to win. He pulled the head off him lasht time out. I had it good from his man's cousin be marriage."

"I had forgotten the races," said Sandy, getting up. "Will you come to them, Hildebrand?"

After a great deal of inquiry young Mr. Hannyside thought he would, as they were quite minor races, and he might look on from the course. "Horse racing in itself was not pernicious," he said, "it was paying to see it, and betting, and so forth."

"Hello! so you've got the two owners here, Sandy," said Standish Blundell. He had ridden up over the grass on a low blood-like mare, with fired hocks and a sulky eye.

"An owner of racers, not by choice," said Hildebrand, hurriedly and pompously.

"And no more real owner than I am," chimed in Araminta snappily from the drawing-room window. "They're as much mine as his."

Standish stood with his mare's bridle over his arm, as he introduced himself. "Want to buy a horse now you are here?" he said. "Can't live in Ireland without a horse—specially in winter."

Standish had heard that Hildebrand was coming. He was never a man to lose much time when he had a horse for sale.

"Must ride, must hunt," said Standish. "Look such a mug if you don't, you see. Look at this mare when you want to buy; five year old, had the irons on, but quite sound, very temperate, doesn't pull. Let you have her for fifty, and might get twice that for her next spring—your winter's hunting for nothing."

"Indeed." Hildebrand looked quite kindly at the black mare. "If hunting could be arranged in that fashion I should not mind showing myself at your meets."

"Delightful animal for a beginner, sir," said Phillips, appearing with a motor tyre in his hands. "Most careful, sir, as to places in fences. Whisky-and-seltzer, sir? Yes, sir."

Standish grinned faintly, and Phillips returned with a small tray in one hand and the motor tyre still in the other. He carried the tray to Standish, who was studying Hildebrand intently.

"You'd ride thirteen seven," said Standish gloomily. "Lots of fat you could get off, of course. Master about, Phillips?"

"I am not expert in riding horseback," observed Hilde-

brand, looking slightly enviously at Blundell's easy seat. "But of course it is quite easy."

"Get up on her," said Standish, slipping off.

Without exactly knowing how, Hildebrand found himself hoisted on the black mare's back. He was always unduly anxious as to first impressions in a new place. If others hunted, he meant to try to hunt. And he certainly did not wish to show ignorance of sport to this gloomily superior visitor. A sniff from the open window made him sit up stiffly. He took up the thin reins of the snaffle-bridle and groped for stirrups several inches too long for him, without remembering that he could take them up. Phillips meanwhile kept up a running chorus of praise.

"Exceedingly charming animal, sir. Most becoming, sir; reliable hunter also."

"Hildebrand, what next?" shrieked Araminta from the window.

The "next" was the gliding advent of a motor through the swing gate and the losing of the Dunlop tyre by Phillips from the steps. As he enlarged on the black mare's perfections he let the tyre go, so that it bumped downwards and raced across the gravel, to take the black mare with a bump on her hocks. She was a quiet and much-enduring animal, but at five years old she was not proof against surprise. She bounded right up under the steps, dashing Standish's tumbler from his hands just as he was pouring the whisky in, so that Hildebrand received the contents of the glass all over him. Then with a snort the black mare, wondering what rolled upon her back, wheeled, Hildebrand clinging to her mane, and rushing down the hill, met the motor as it whizzed up.

Motor and mare stopped simultaneously, the black mare, somewhat weary of vagaries in the heat, flinging her fore legs out with a jerk, almost touching the yellow car. She stopped, but her rider, terrified and confused, shot from his uneasy position on the saddle head foremost into Mrs.

Butler's black silken lap, and clung about that lady, as drowning men cling to straws.

"Is he hurted, ma'am?" said Kennedy, the chauffeur, turning the car off, as his mistress shrieked for aid.

"He is not but frightened," answered Mikkelo, arriving paint-brush in hand through the shrubs. "Frighted, the craythur."

Mrs. Butler raised her voice and shrieked aloud more loudly. A fervent odour of whisky diffused itself about the car.

"At this hour," stormed Mrs. Butler. "At this hour. Open the door, Kennedy, and take him away, Standish. Help! Mr. Acland. *Is* this amusing?"

Hildebrand raised his ruffled head; his cheek, speared by a hat-pin, bled freely over Mrs. Butler's lace tie. "It was—her vice," he gasped. "She ran away—reared—plunged—a Centaur," gasped Hildebrand, "would have been powerless——"

Mrs. Butler, in glacial tones, advised him not to try long words until he felt better; and she pushed him back.

Hildebrand, wild-eyed and gory, stood humbly on the steps of the car.

"The quietest mare in all Ireland," boomed Standish solemnly. "If you had but taken up the reins, four motor tyres wouldn't disturb her."

Mrs. Butler sniffed with too evident meaning. "Take him away," she snorted. "Disgraceful."

At this moment Hildebrand became aware of the potent smell of spirits, and of Sandy and Standish in silent laughter close by; the stain on the teetotaller's reputation was too much for them. Phillips rescued his motor tyre gravely, and stood by to listen; Nora and Miss Mellicombe leant from the open window.

"She—thinks—he—was—is—drunk!" gasped Nora hysterically.

Becoming aware of the smell, Hildebrand sniffed also.

He looked at the large lady, who sat in open fury in her car, her face red and flushed.

"I fear that I have broken your flask of spirits," said Hildebrand politely.

At this point Sandy gave it up, and wondered how much a man may laugh without injuring himself. Standish Blundell's rare bray of laughter rent the air as a shell does.

Mrs. Butler glared at Hildebrand. "I, young man, do not require drink at twelve o'clock on a July morning, and I do not stagger off horses," she said. "No. Pah! The car reeks of it."

Hildebrand's cheek bled freely; his face was white; his eyes blazing; but as he realized the imputation a flood of poppy red changed his pallor to oblivion. He, Hildebrand Hannyside, member of Greater Bethel, a strict teetotaler, was believed to be intoxicated.

For a moment he sought for speech and found it not.

"Worcester sauce . . ." said Mrs. Butler. "I must come in to borrow a clean tie . . . Worcester sauce is excellent. I've seen it tried, or plain soda, and take him out of the sun."

"Be careful of the sun," said Standish gloomily. "And fetch the Worcester sauce, Phillips."

"Certainly, sir," said Phillips, going in rapidly.

When words broke from Hildebrand they came in a piteous torrent. "He! He! He! He was a strict teetotaler."

Mrs. Butler said, "Of course," duly, and sniffed loudly.

"A strict teetotaler. A crusader against the use of alcohol—a—oh heaven," wailed Hildebrand wildly.

"The little taste that was in the glass couldn't hurt a fly," said Mikkelo soothingly. "I seen Phillips bring the decanter down an' it but half full. 'Tis the shock is on him, ma'am, and the mare to whirl away oberight the hall door."

"Oh heaven!" said Hildebrand. "Madam—you shall

listen—she believes—she thinks, that I—I—that the smell of that whisky came from me.”

Mrs. Butler turned on the step and smiled cruelly.

“It didn’t come from me anyhow,” said Standish gravely. “I had no whisky. It was a pity you got up, Hannyside, even on that quiet black mare.”

“Pick-me-up, sir?” said Phillips urbanely, appearing with a tray. “Mixed from old formula, sir.”

Strong emotion will turn the mildest nature—what Hildebrand yelled out forcibly was “pick yourself up,” and if Phillips had not been agile he must have gone down before the onslaught. As it was, Hildebrand caught his own foot in the motor tyre, which was laid up against the steps, and plunged, caught in it, down the slope, struggling to keep his balance. A deep echoing “disgraceful—there you see” ringing in his maddened ears.

Phillips picked up the tyre and went gravely away, his expression one of complete sympathy. Sandy held his weary head, and Standish, with the black mare’s bridle over his arm, looked on with unmixed gravity.

“If you bathed your face,” he said at length. “They tell me cold water is excellent. And the races?”

“Oh damn the races,” said Hildebrand, stalking back.

“Well, if you don’t feel up to the sun,” said Standish, “they’ll all understand your not being there.”

Young Mr. Hannyside took the stone steps three at a time as he vanished to his room.

“It’s sad—in one so young,” remarked Standish to the group at the window.

Mrs. Butler had driven in on her way to answer herself that Miss Knox and her sons were not at Castleknock. She had been to her sister’s and found Mollie out with her pupils.

As she replaced the gore-stained lace with something of Nora’s and preached on the terrific corruption of the present-day young men—completely ignoring Nora’s murmurs of “teetotaller,” Hildebrand came to his window

and looked out. There are moments when the overburdened mind of man cannot keep silent. Hildebrand, as he had rushed upstairs, was not at all sure that he would ever speak to Standish Blundell again, but now, seeing that gentleman alone outside—the car had gone into the yard—absorbing his deferred drink, young Hannyside felt that he must speak or go mad. Leaning out, he plunged into fiery discourse. He almost wept at the memory of the impression which he had made. He denounced Mrs. Butler as unchristian and unbelieving.

Standish finished his long weak drink.

"It was her nose," he said gloomily, "she smelt it."

The desire for metaphor plunged Hildebrand into a flurried muttering of words. He began "All is not gold that glitters," and stopped half-way, and tried "Much ado about Nothing," and did not find that suit, and opened several other sayings such as "A long lane——" and "Much cry little wool," and several biblical texts, ending none of them, until Standish looked up gloomily to remark that he was waiting for the right one. Hildebrand finished with a clearly alluded "Oh d——hang the woman," uttered too loudly for caution.

"If she heard that now," said Standish. "And you're coming to the races?"

Hildebrand felt his punctured cheek and said sourly that races were ungodly.

"If you don't then," said Standish, "they'll all say it was because you couldn't, that you had to sleep it off. Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Better come and look your soberest," said Standish gravely.

Hildebrand's plunge of wrath was almost dangerous at an open window. "I—I will come then," he said tragically. "I will come for the honour of Greater Bethel."

"If you care to ride her over," Standish suggested, nodding towards the mare, "Sandy would lend me his cob."

Young Mr. Hannyside, with a hasty glance at the black,

said firmly that he must practise horse-riding before he ventured out on fiery animals.

"With motors," shuddered Hildebrand, "and crowds."

"And whisky tents," said Standish absently. "You'll never find a mare to suit you better than this one, Hanny-side, for you must ride when you're here. Lord above us, wouldn't any ordinary horse, instead of standing still to drop you over into the car, have turned round to kick you as you went."

"Gracious heavens!" said Hildebrand nervously.

Standish handed the mare's bridle to Mikkelo, who was luckily near, and went gloomily into the drawing-room.

"He's coming to the races," said Standish, "to clear his smirched reputation. He says Mrs. Butler will live to repentance. He's rather like Ophelia up there," added Standish thoughtfully, "before she jumped out of the window."

"She fell into a brook, Mr. Blundell," said Araminta reprovingly.

"It might be Jezebel I was thinking of," said Standish slowly, "or Juliet. I was sick once, and my aunts read Shakespeare to me. I went on with it afterwards. I know it all now."

Mrs. Butler asked for her motor; she said she would go on. "Dermot was to have driven with me," she said, "but he never came. And I feared that pushing young person, Miss Knox, might have been here. And the boys often come over."

"If you had tried the lake. . . ." said Standish. "Hold her head to the car, you idiot, Mikkelo. Her head—Man alive, can she see it with her heels?"

"The what?" screamed Mrs. Butler, gripping Blundell's shoulder.

"The lake," said Standish. "Oh, on top of it I mean. There were a boatful learning to fish when I rode by, and two of them were children."

Mrs. Butler, with heightened colour, made for the door;

she was already growing friendly with Araminta, who had chorused "pushing, indeed, and foolish," to the remark about Mollie.

"A very foolish young person," said Araminta, coming out to the steps. "My poor uncle quite spoilt her for her position. We make her a small allowance," said Araminta grandly, "out of charity."

Mrs. Butler contemplated Araminta thoughtfully. When she grew older one would probably forget how plain she had been in her youth, but her money would not be a memory. Mrs. Butler asked Araminta to luncheon.

Hildebrand, looking down from behind his window upstairs, saw the stately lady sail into the sunshine.

"You did not, I trust, forget the Worcester sauce, Phillips," asked Mrs. Butler sternly.

"Certainly not, madam," said Phillips blandly, "with mixtures, madam."

Hildebrand flew for his coat, that he might hear further and shout contradiction, but by the time he had found it the car had started.

"And they all actually seemed to enjoy it," muttered Mr. Hannyside almost tearfully.

The Moye meeting was a very small one, but Irish people in summer had not much to do, and a stream of motors and traps found their way to the little course near the Gullees river.

A small stand, naked of covering or comfort, reared its angular little self against the sky. One might enter for five shillings, or half-a-crown for a lady. No plunger, in fact, could remain outside where the sprinkling of bookies looked doubtfully at anything above half-a-crown, and were quite capable of being missing should a well-backed favourite get home.

But Hildebrand would not go in. He considered it wrong.

"It would give it too great countenance in my eyes," he said, stopping at the click of the turnstile.

"*What* will you do with such a youth, Mrs. Acland," said Mrs. Butler as she passed. "The whisky from the tents will kill him!"

With a martyr's glance, Hildebrand drifted out unhappily amongst the crowd. He was besought by old Bessy to buy oranges. He was offered shots at Aunt Sallies. Three-card men followed his light grey coat as steel follows a magnet, so that their table was constantly in his way. The stout lady who owned the load of cock and feather told him loudly that he "had no sort of pluck at all."

Some one took away his silk handkerchief, and the first race involved him in a roaring mass of excited humanity, which bore him in their midst as the horses struggled past the post. After this Sandy came out to keep him company.

The baskets and the motors were being unpacked; sandwiches and cakes and drinks were being disposed of.

Hildebrand, plump and neat in dark grey, came to lunch full of desire to meet the people of the country, and to show them the wickedness of Mrs. Butler's evil thoughts, for a less active mind would have detected the undercurrent in the looks these strangers cast at him, most of them good natured, and several quite sad.

"Dreadful for Sandy," said Kathleen Ievers. "He does look all puffy, poor thing."

"At that hour," remarked Sir James. "Hey, what? Lord, where will his nerve be when he's thirsty?"

Derek Knox Harding, the master of the hounds, nodded at introduction almost curtly, murmuring, "Hate boys who drink," to Sally, his sister.

Hildebrand's plump cheeks grew flushed from anger and worry. He sat upon the steps of the car and ate lobster patties as though they were wool.

"Whisky-and-Perrier, sir," said Phillips.

"Lemonade!" shot out Hildebrand savagely, "or plain Perrier with lemon in it. How can you all drink stimulants?"

Derek Knox Harding turned inquiringly. He was lunching close by at his own car.

"Is it less wasteful than throwing them over people's clothes?" said Standish gloomily, but the lids which hung above his melancholy eyes quivered in quick succession towards Derek.

There were moments when Araminta sided with her cousin.

"Hildebrand is a teetotaller. He has always been a teetotaller," she said sternly. "It was Mr. Blundell's whisky."

"Which he never got," said Standish sadly.

"And it was upset on Hildebrand," went on Araminta firmly; "that was why he smelt of it."

Hildebrand rose with a lobster patty in his hand and absolutely smiled at Araminta. He had three more patties and several sandwiches and cheesecakes, because he felt that now he would be recognized for what he was. He began to discuss racing very volubly, and as Sandy stayed outside with him he was not lost again in the crowd.

"It is," said Hildebrand sententiously, "the most foolish sport on earth, and the most degraded. Look at the crowds about you—gnawing bones, drinking porter and whisky, wasting their earnings, all to see if one wretched beast on four legs passes——"

"Another on three," boomed Standish in deep-voiced, grief-stricken tones.

To this Standish added gloomily that owners knew too much, horses wanting all their legs being the very pith of racing.

Araminta having salved her conscience by announcing that she would send all her winnings to the heathen, had already made a bet. She came past them now, politely, if not enthusiastically, escorted by Dermot Butler, and she was eager for another winner.

"Mikkelo spoke of something," said Araminta. "Does any one remember what it was?"

"A mare of Clanchy's, madam," said Phillips. "May not please as to complete soundness, but warms up, I am told."

Araminta clung coyly to Dermot as they struggled back. Big, good-natured men elbowed her as she went, but her tolerant pleasure in Ireland was still with her, and she was agreeably surprised at their good behaviour.

"They are really not brandishing things or trailing coats," said Araminta pleasantly. "So exaggerated, what one reads."

Having got into the stand, a glance at Clanchy's mare made Dermot shake his head firmly. Lady Lass was a weedy bay with more quality than substance and distinctly "favouring a leg."

They passed on to the favourite—a big chestnut—and the money for the heathen prayer-books was entrusted to his care.

Araminta found racing pleasanter than she had dreamt of. She held Mr. Dermot Butler firmly to her side, following him at an angular trot when he tried to escape. A wasted half-crown having to be considered when Clanchy's mare came home in a canter, and the chestnut four-year-old finished what Mikkelo called down the course, Araminta gloomily suggested more luncheon.

"If I had put that two-and-six on Clanchy's animal," she said.

"You would have got back ten shillings," said Dermot, looking round to Sandy.

"And prayer-books are ninepence each. If I bet again and lose," said Araminta, "there will be so much each time off my subscription to Mr. Eustace's mission."

Hildebrand was also having more lunch. Sandy had duly introduced him to every one who came up, and the warm glow of satisfaction was warming young Mr. Hannyside's heart. He met old Sir James. He was introduced to Lady Hermione Cahir. He swam on the crest of a wave of courtly severity.

"Like Ireland?" said Lady Hermione to him; "like the funny people?"

"I find them reasonable and sensible," said Hildebrand. "I should say they were a level-headed race, and most friendly."

"Humph! humph! humph!" said Sir James.

Hildebrand talked of Northlap and his life there. He bewailed his uncle's pernicious will.

"For I," said Hildebrand, raising a plump, white hand, "I abhor racing. Fate has made me an unwilling owner. It can never find a member of my congregation to countenance the sport."

"Humph! humph! Won't die of that," grunted old Sir James. "Humph! well, humph! Hey? What?"

"Have you got the Perrier open, Phillips? Where's Phillips?" said Sandy.

"Or even to make a bet," said Hildebrand, imperiously waving his fifth lobster patty.

"Four shillings, sir," said Phillips, laying four greasy coins in Hildebrand's hand. "And your own, sir? Easy win, sir."

"But, I . . ." cried Hildebrand. "I made no bet, Phillips."

Amid a series of grunts over the rim of a long tumbler, Sir James said, "Hey, what?" several times. "Gives us a lecture and spots the winner," grunted the big old man.

"I never made a bet," wailed Hildebrand. "Phillips said something going away about a mare. I stayed here."

But long before Hildebrand could get any one to listen to him, they had all drifted away grinning. With a bruised and chastened heart he put the shillings in his pocket, reproving Phillips severely, and wandered away alone. His three-and-twenty years had never known so pungent a day. To be accused of drinking; to have won money betting. The crowds were surging to the edge of the course, the horses were just out for a race. Mastene, the favourite, had been backed for every penny which

could be got on, until the answer "Full on Mastene" came from every bookmaker. But here, outside, one, styling himself Laurie Cassidy, who was sailing for Australia next day, had taken all he could get, trusting to an accident or his own legs. Mr. Cassidy was stout and young, but a false beard which he carried in his bag served instead of time when he wanted to grow old. He left his stand to watch the result, and Hildebrand seeing it, got up on the eminence to look at the race.

One horse was the same as another to Hildebrand. He merely saw a struggling mass of gay-coloured jackets, and heard a fearful tornado of yells as Mastene sailed home two lengths in front.

"Gracious! how excited they are," said Hildebrand, watching the horses being pulled up. He stayed absently on his box waiting for the crowd to disperse, but, instead, they thickened about him, thrusting tickets of red-and-white into his hands.

"One shilling—Mastene at evens. A crown—Mastene two shillings here."

The tickets multiplied; Hildebrand looked at the crowd and shook his head.

"I have nothing to say to Mastene, my good men," he said coldly. "He is not one of my stud."

The crowd was wild for its winnings. Hildebrand wore a grey suit and was plump and young; he was something like Cassidy.

"Will ye pay us?" thundered some one in threatening tones.

"My good man," said Hildebrand, "I do not owe you anything."

"Holy Hivin, to-night, an' the ticket in me hand. And ye scooped the money as fast as ye could," roared some one else.

"But listen," said Hildebrand, "listen, my friends."

To which a voice made reply that if they were not instantly paid, there was one man who was not likely to

be able to listen for a taste of time, because the head on his shoulders wouldn't be his own. Some one put up a stick. A chill of horror ran down Hildebrand's spine. They took him for the bookie on whose stand he stood. He looked feverishly round for help.

"I. My heavens! I am not the man you mean," he cried. "Pray listen to reason, my good men, and don't be foolish."

"Ye will not be a man at all, but a corpse in five minutes if you don't sthoph yer jaw and pay," observed a comforting farmer.

"If you dare; out of my way." Hildebrand tried to get off his box. He was banged back there with his hat left behind, and a large bump replacing it on one side of his head. The refuge of all Englishmen came to his whirling mind. He shrieked. "The Law. Police! Police!" as the crowd surged in with set, ominous faces, and the lust of blood in their minds. Get an angry crowd together, and it becomes as one murderous man, incapable of reason, impulse swayed, brutal, until its deed is done.

"There's a row," said Sandy. "There's a—what!"

"It's Mr. Hannyside, sir," said Phillips softly. "He appears—er—to have been laying the odds and got into trouble, sir."

"It's Hildebrand!" gasped Sandy. "Come on, Standish."

The big man and the little heaved their way to rescue. Hildebrand remained swaying on his box, scientifically knocked into place by a stick or a fist whenever he tried to get down.

"They'll kill him before we get there," said Sandy. "What has he done now?"

"There's Magner in it," boomed Standish.

"Apparently welshed, sir," said Phillips politely, keeping up the rear armed with a bottle of Perrier. "Deep gentleman, sir, young Mr. Hannyside."

"Give us our money that ye took," yelled the crowd.

With despair in his heart, Hildebrand felt for and

dragged out his four ill-gotten shillings, proffering them to the men about him as all he would give for liberty.

They closed on him with a rush just as big Standish got up.

"Let go, you idiots," roared Standish. "Mike Magner, Croghessy, Halpin!" he called to three by name, "that's Mr. Sandy Acland's cousin."

"God forbid!" said Sandy, who was stopped by two big men.

"Doin' murder while your real man is in Cork by now," roared Standish. "God help you all for fools; does this one look as if he had the sense of a bookmaker?"

Some one laughed—sticks were lowered—Mike Magner, a tenant of Standish's, found Hildebrand's hat, and punched it into shape, wiped it with his coat-sleeve, and proffered it politely.

"Axin' ye're honour's pardon," said the man who had threatened five varieties of death, "but ye up on his box and all, and fat as himself."

Hildebrand clasped his aching head. He made for the nearest support, which happened to be a sweet stall, and he sat on it.

"Pardon," he said rigidly. "Where are the police? Assault on a peaceable citizen. Where are the police? Good heavens! You," he almost shrieked to Standish. "Stop them. Arrest them!"

"God save you, think of the king's pockets," said Standish gloomily. "He is a teetotaller, Mike; it's no use offering that plaster."

Poor Mike Magner, urged by penitence, had returned with a brimming glass of fiery spirits.

"The mistake bein' natural entirely, Misther Blundell," said Mike penitently. "Wouldn't he take it for friendship."

"Very large bump just over left ear, sir," said Phillips sympathetically. "Exceedingly painful I fear, sir. Perhaps a wet handkerchief, sir, or a silver spoon."

"A lump of raw meat," said Mike Wagner hastily, "is grand. And a drop of good spirits within. Be said by me now, sir, an' take it down. 'Twill hearten ye now, ye're lookin' sickly."

"I do not *touch* intoxicants, man," roared Hildebrand acidly.

Mr. Wagner explained as a mother would to a child that he had not brought that same, but a good honest glass of whisky. "'Twas the mercy of God," he added, absently taking the whisky himself, "that we none of us in the fluster made a fair stroke at the young gentleman, an' he your friend and all, yer honour."

Hildebrand put his hand to his aching head and asked what that was.

"Praises be to Heaven, that was but the wind of a stick," said Wagner politely.

Hildebrand rose stiffly from the sweet stall, quite unaware of what he had sat upon; fragments of sugar-sticks fell on either hand, and a glass bottle full of bull's-eyes tipped over, to shed its contents on some brown slabs of toffee, to which they stuck glutinately.

The small girl who watched the stall looked on in awed dismay, waiting the return of the stout and hasty-tempered lady proprietor.

With a scratched cheek and a bumped head, torn and dishevelled, full of bitterness, Hildebrand was taken to the car. His progress was one of jerks, as at each moment he stopped to declaim the lawlessness of Ireland, as at the next he swore that those who had assaulted him should find gaol their resting-place.

If any one had taken any notice of him he would have borne it better; but no one did, save Phillips, who marched behind muttering "Bump—dreadful bump," until Standish asked him in melancholy tones when he had been a boating man. A large and amiable looking pair of constables looming lazily through the crowd, Hildebrand pounced on them wildly.

He had been battered—assaulted—outraged. He demanded the protection of the law.

“My, my, my!” Constable Hayes scratched his nose confusedly. “And they to take you for Cassidy, a vilyin that welshed me own money two years back, and paid me in sixpences when I ran agin him by chance. My, my! What tuk ye up on his box, sir?”

“Sure the gintleman was likely anxious for his own money,” said Constable Green sympathetically. “Well, well. No offence, sir. Ye might have a small bit on out here as well as within.”

“I would not say,” said Standish, “Sandy, that this boy would not be taken ill with the fluster that’s on him.”

“D’ye charge them, sir?” said Hayes, listening with manifest fear to Hildebrand’s outburst. “Ye can identify them then?”

Hildebrand paused. He looked round. One beaming Irish face was so very like another.

“There was one with a red beard,” he said. “He struck me.”

Constable Green said soothingly that foxy men were always hasty, and then looked at Sandy and coughed in apology.

“And one with a squint,” rapped out Hildebrand, “and one called Mike and one Patsy. But Mr. Acland and Mr. Blundell know the assaulters, they spoke to them, they stopped them.”

Constable Hayes held up an expectant pencil.

“I,” said Standish, in a clear voice, looking back at Mike Magner, who was close by. “I merely called out to two of my tenants, respectable men who were doubtless going to make the peace. One brought stimulants afterwards to Mr. Hannyside.”

“Good, begob,” said Mike Magner contentedly.

The grey eyes of Constable Green fell upon his ruddy-coloured beard and scanned it thoughtfully.

"If you cannot identify them, sir——" said the policeman, with a respectful lack of hope.

"You are all one as bad as another," blared Hildebrand, rushing on.

"As the beard on ye fit to light fires by," said Constable Hayes to Magner, "that was a nice mistook ye all made. I seen ye far off."

"'Twas near a job for the coroner," said Magner, absently melting into the crowd.

"Good gracious, Hildebrand!" said Araminta, "because you will stay outside with all the drunken people surely you need not play Aunt Sally," added that young lady icily. The place was full of people getting ready to leave. She felt a certain responsibility as Hildebrand's cousin.

It was the last straw. Hildebrand sat down upon the step of the car and hated the world bitterly. Mrs. Butler in her green satin looked at him with scornful meaning.

"What will you do with him, Mr. Acland?" drifted plainly to Hildebrand's ears.

"We might reform him," said Sandy very gravely, as he took some tea. "He's young."

"In a brawl here with all those men," said Mrs. Butler. "Here!"

"Me mama says," observed a thin and different voice, "she towld me to say." A small ragged child appeared on the scene.

"Well?" said Sandy.

"That . . . that's him, the fat young man—that will ye pay for Peggy's leg that ye sat on. Its thruppence," said the shrill voice.

Hildebrand shot to his feet glaring at his new tormentor.

"I declare, Hannyside," said Standish gloomily. "I declare."

The motors were all crammed together. Every one stopped to listen as with a fresh burst of rage Hildebrand

declaimed that he had never heard of Peggy, never sat on any female. Never.

"An' ye carried two bits with ye," said the fearless voice. "Ma says, nothin' short of a shillin' would pay her for the upset ye made."

"Local name for sweetmeat, sir," explained Phillips, coming to the rescue. "Peggy leg, sir. And excuse me—two pieces adhering to—er—your trousers, sir."

Amid the laughter which rent the air Phillips gravely removed two pieces of fat brown sugar-stick from Hildebrand's grey trousers.

"Effect of sunshine upon the sugar, sir," said Phillips.

"Phillips," said Mr. Acland when he found some breath, "be quiet."

"Certainly, sir," said Phillips, walking off to get fresh tea for his master.

Mr. Hannyside drew a shilling from his pocket, and with something resembling a sob in his throat, flung it to the child and sank down again upon the step where he was at least partially hidden.

"I do hope," whispered Araminta to Nora, "that the smell of that spilt whisky did not get into Hildebrand's head. He has behaved so strangely to-day."

"Curiously intelligent and reasonable people the Irish," said Sandy that night at dinner. "You saw it at once, didn't you, Hildebrand?"

"I see none," said Hildebrand, savagely holding his throbbing head; "they are the most lawless and impossible nation in the world."

"Dear me," said Sandy thoughtfully. "Dear me."

"And I will have my horses back at Northlap or there is no law in the world," stormed Hildebrand wildly. "I shall not stay here to be, to be——"

"Or not to be," finished Standish sadly.

"To be libelled—splashed with other people's whisky, beaten for a welsher, misunderstood as to Peggy," stammered Hildebrand.

"The horses are going to stay now and they'll get quite used to you in a little," said Sandy soothingly.

"I think," said Nora five minutes later—they were having coffee outside—"that Mr. Hannyside has gone to his own room, Phillips ; his head ached."

"Very unfortunate—embroilment in rows," said Phillips gravely, "Mr. Hannyside's not accustomed to dealing with excited crowds as yet."

Something choked audibly at the window above them.

CHAPTER X

Come unto these yellow sands.

—*Tempest.*

"THERE'S a goer for you, sir," said Watson enthusiastically. Doing a steady half-speed canter, Red Fairy swept over the thick grass of the big field—pulling double, shaking his head as if he could not have enough. He came down a slight slope with the movement of a perfect galloper, but as he cantered up the next rise he sprawled just a little.

"I can't like his hock action up hill," said Nora. "And he's light in the middle."

Hildebrand and Araminta looked with gloomy annoyance at their string.

Araminta's love of bed was greatly tempered by "Two Little Girls in Blue" chanted in varying keys on one note, from a too early hour. Her politely worded hint of another room was at first ignored by Mrs. Acland, and then when made plainer refused with deep sorrow.

Because in the blue room, she would be next door to the children, who were so noisy, and the east room was being papered, or going to be. And the corner room had rats in it.

"But surely this horse cannot get beaten," said Araminta irritably.

"He must win next spring. He couldn't keep us on like this." Sandy looked patiently at his self-invited guests.

"We must have things settled," said Miss Mellicombe fiercely. "There is Arthur Eustace waiting for me, and

all the jewels I am to have, and the money. I am sick of affairs running on in this fashion."

"And I want to live at Northlap," grumbled Hildebrand, "and to—take a helpmeet."

Sandy said thoughtfully he thought it was mate, but no doubt it was quite the same.

"And live a humble, goodly life," said Hildebrand sententiously—ignoring the interruption—"and," he sighed heavily, "as it is, what will be left? With oats, hay, repairs, boys, harness, entrance fees, what will be left? These old brutes eating in idleness when there are cabs to draw."

"That youngster there," said Watson, coming up, "may make a useful horse in a couple of years. And we had better run Beau Jay in a race or two over here. He might beat what he'll meet and get passed on."

The little brown horse was cantering now. He went evenly, yet stiffly, with a long stride which never seemed to vary. "That's his canter and that's his gallop," said Watson discontentedly, "but we'll enter him—and if all the others fall he could win—he's never tired—he's never hot, and he gains two lengths at every fence he comes to."

"Wouldn't ye pull him out for the Galway Plate?" suggested Mikkelo, who now came by what he called a short cut to his work. The said short cut being quite half a mile out of his way. "I'd like that little horse," added Mikkelo critically. "Begonnes, but I'd like him."

Pop-Gun, pulling up close to them, immediately tried to eat grass. He was scarcely blown—quite dry, he looked at the world with a lazily generous eye. He did his best and could do no more.

"It's the uncertainty," groaned Araminta. "If anything happened to this Red Fancy. If he tripped over a fence."

"Tripped! God save ye," remarked Mikkelo to himself, in what he believed to be an undertone.

"Or stumbled," said Araminta, eyeing Mikkelo. "Hilde-

brand, you will have to go to that race—to attend to events.”

Sandy muttered something about holding the horse's head when he jumped, and Hildebrand said stiffly that no doubt, as it was to watch his own interests, it would be forgiven.

“You really ought to give the stud up,” said Araminta kindly. “You ought to, Hildebrand, with your conscience.”

Hildebrand grunted. The walk back to breakfast was enlivened by lectures on extravagance, relating to the wearing by Araminta of bright-buckled shoes and a flimsy petticoat which caught.

Miss Grimes, it appeared, wore suitable boots when she walked through grass, and a short tweed skirt. She saved the money for greater purposes than buckles and lace.

Araminta replying heatedly, that women with platter feet needn't care what they wore, and that if, as Hildebrand said, Miss Grimes wore short petticoats she did it to show her ankles, the cousins plunged into an argument, which lasted until they reached the steps.

“God save us—but isn't it peevish they are,” confided Mikkelo audibly to himself. “Peevish and crabsome.”

Araminta returned defiance as to her shortcomings—she flung her co-heirship at Hildebrand with a sure aim. She would sell her half of everything, she would come and live in Northlap, she would give balls under his silly, flat-booted wife's nose, to which when she had lost breath Hildebrand had his say and dared her to show temper or extravagance. Northlap was his. Half of everything was his. He'd take the jewels for his future wife—his share of them—and put them in the bank, as she would be too sensible to wear them.

The Aclands walked near but did not speak.

“Jakus—peevish,” said Mikkelo, again to himself.

“What's that?” snapped Araminta wheeling. “What did you say, man?”

"But a word I was using to a robbit, 'Missy,'" said Mikkelo, blandly innocent, "Pee wit, I said to it—fearin' the dogs might ate it. That's an ugly, frightsome habit I have, talkin' aloud," he added to himself, quite audibly.

"Bridget," said Mrs. Acland, through the kitchen window, "there are trout for breakfast; fry them in oil."

"'Tis done in butter now, ma'am," said Mrs. Cafferty, showing a floury face.

"Oil," said Nora absently, "is soothing. Very well, Bridget, have a salad for luncheon. Sandy, I don't know why you are laughing."

"It was at Mikkelo's robbit," said Sandy in choked tones.

Miss Mellicombe made a good breakfast. She believed fish and chops and ham to be better summer food than eggs. Hildebrand grew more affable over a large helping of rabbit pie—and Nora eyed them both with more thought than love.

"I—had a long talk with Mrs. Butler, yesterday," said Araminta. "She has an excellent cook, by the way, Mrs. Acland—such good pastry and savouries—a long talk," said Araminta. "She tells me how absurdly Mollie Knox behaved—out boating with young men; neglecting her duties—neglecting the children's education. If Mollie is not careful"—Miss Mellicombe took a large slice of brawn—"we can discontinue our generosity and force her to work. She had the training of young children, a delightful task, in her hands."

Miss Brown sighed as she looked at her charges.

"She might try being a lady help," said Hildebrand.

"She's going to," said Nora drily. "At once——"

"Mrs. Butler," said Araminta, "fears that the girl's head might be turned by the boys' kindness. She is glad that Mollie is leaving at once. Where has she got this new situation?"

"Here," said Nora. "I—want a secretary—and I always forget to do the flowers."

Miss Mellicombe laid down her knife and fork. She stared blankly at her hostess, she explained that it was not really kind to put Mollie in a false position, to take her away from serious work.

"She—pursues Mr. Dermot Butler," said Araminta, "she writes to ask him to come over and see her—I know it—I saw the postcard—Mrs. Butler had it. It was 'Daisy and Maud say you may take them fishing, as you want to.' Mrs. Butler was furious. Mollie must not come here, Mrs. Acland, must not."

"Of course it *will* mean a lot of people for luncheon," said Nora absently. "She is coming to-day."

The arrival of Miss Knox about midday was marked by excessive coldness on the part of her distant relations. Araminta immediately explained that she considered it wrong and foolish of Mollie. Hildebrand wished to know if Mrs. Acland's house was to be looked on as an hotel. They met their cousin on the doorstep.

"The school-room," said Araminta coldly, "is right along the passage, Mollie."

"But I am in the drawing-room," observed Nora from the window.

"Oh, peevish, dam peevish," observed Mikkelo loudly to the railing which he was painting.

"Gorgons," said Mrs. Acland to Mollie, who looked frightened. "Don't you mind them, my dear. And we are going to the sea to-morrow; they want to see Ireland, and——"

"It's a grey horse this time," said Sandy, looking down the avenue.

"He showed us that one before," said Nora composedly. "He forgets."

"It has probably improved," said Sandy, watching the arrival of Dennis Butler, and then listening to minute reasons concerning this fresh view of the grey, and the owner's earnest desire to take advice about an off hind leg.

Mollie, with her hair curling round her pretty face, came

out to join the council. She said unkindly that she thought the grey had grown thin.

"It's from always riding him," said Mollie severely. "You're generally on him, when we find you at the lake or up the hills."

Sandy coughed discreetly. A lightning-like glance from Dennis made him endeavour to sneeze, and to fail signally.

About three Mr. Dermot Butler drove his motor over to ask Sandy what oil he used—he was not satisfied with his brand.

Nora remarked, as she poured out tea, that she began to feel as if she really had a house-party.

"And it was quite nasty of you, Sandy," she added, in a severe undertone to her husband, "to remind Dermot that he had himself recommended you the oil we use here. Memory in some circumstances is *absurd*," said Mrs. Acland with withering emphasis.

The evening was shortened by the discussions of Araminta and Hildebrand as to their journey next day. Araminta scorned all ideas of anything at all amusing occurring. And Hildebrand was completely certain that the seaside hotel they were going to would not be clean.

Sandy and Nora, as mere inhabitants of the country, sat and listened equably.

They were going by train; a new tyre necessary for the car not having arrived. Mollie Knox, despite several open hints as to Miss Brown's loneliness, sat with them, her pretty little face set sadly. This pleasant visit was hers for the present, but Mollie looked out at the grey dreariness of the future, when she must work for her living, with the munificence of ten shillings a week as her one certainty of income. Typewriting—Mollie knew that if she went back to it it would be no longer a pastime, with work clicked out in her pleasant flat, but a forced and endless labour, with weary fingers tapping at the cruel keys; with fears of mistakes losing her her work, and cruel letters

lying near telling her that MSS. must be delivered without fail by a specified date. The work we live by is always a hungry wolf, eating our brains and power of enjoyment; a wild beast, with sharp fangs, and yet a thing we dread to lose the power of holding by the chain wrought of links of anxiety. The worker knows no pleasant certainty of yearly dividends which come to him in sickness or in health. Our sickness is an ever-present dread; the idleness we sometimes snatch at recklessly means double toil when it is over.

Mollie looked out at a rich summer's night, flower-scented, star-jewelled—great trees made dark blots against the evening dimness; big beetles blundering noisily; bats winging crookedly up and down. She wanted the right to enjoy it all without thought or fear. And her face grew sadder as she remembered how she had never given much thought to the future, believing her kind old cousin would leave her in comfort.

No girl dreams of a mateless life. Mollie would whip herself to visions of some rich Prince Charming who would lift her for ever out of the slough of doubt. And the Prince Charming insisted on assuming the form of a tanned, grey-eyed youth in shabby clothes, whose yearly income was generally enough to keep him in tobacco and forage—a man with nothing clearly must not marry a penniless wife.

"*What* are you thinking of?" said Araminta tartly. "You ought to read French dictionaries, Mollie, instead of dreaming."

Mollie, waking with a start, replied demurely that she was studying the spelling of the word life, to which Araminta, with the patience one uses to a very young child, spelt out L-I-F-E, in distinct tones, and wondered how any one could think of it with a Y in it.

"Also of the National," said Mollie. "When your religious convictions are too much for you, Araminta, I shall be extremely interested in it. If there was anything,"

she said, growing hopeful, "I could do over here—those creamery things, with steam spouts—don't they want manageresses?"

Sandy asked if Mollie knew how to make butter.

"You churn it with cream," said Mollie, "and sell it."

Sandy said he feared she had a great deal to learn as yet.

"But I want to stay here," said Mollie, going to bed.

A sliding drive upon an outside car brought Araminta and Hildebrand to Cara Station—they were honoured with the grey cob, a leisurely but trustworthy animal, to draw them thither.

The others came later in Dermot Butler's motor, which he had again driven over to ask a question about. Dermot was resplendent in pale grey. He was a distinctly good-looking young fellow, and it took him some hours to choose his motor caps. He developed extreme nervousness just as they got to the station, wheeling the car out of the yard almost before Nora had got out. A glance at a dark-green brougham made Nora guess the reason.

Mrs. Butler was upon the platform, fussily awaiting the arrival of a visitor.

"Miss Hall Marten," she said to Nora. "Evelina Hall Marten. An only child, Mrs. Acland, and beautiful—so suitable," hinted Mrs. Butler softly, with a glance in the direction of the river, where she believed Dermot to be fishing. "So lucky to get her here. Oh, Dennis!" she added in surprised tones.

Dennis had come to look for a parcel. It could not have been a nice parcel, for he blushed hotly when he saw his stepmother.

"Miss Knox, I presume, is going away?" questioned Mrs. Butler affably.

Nora nodded.

Mrs. Butler was pleased. "I feared you might ask her over, and visits," she said, "are unsettling to volatile and foolish natures." Here she looked sternly at the bit of

blue skirt showing behind some stacks of meal, as she realized that Dennis's search for his parcel had led him in that direction.

Araminta immediately improved the hour by agreeing heartily. "And it would be to stay on indefinitely," said Araminta. "Kindness may be unwise and almost cruel in the end."

Mrs. Butler sat upon a truck. "To stay on indefinitely. When—and how?" she listened feverishly as Araminta explained. Mr. Acland was making Castleknock the girl's home.

"At his age," said Mrs. Butler, just as the truck ran on, and to save herself she spun wildly into Sandy's arms.

"And not even content with one," observed Nora as she watched labels being affixed. "Sandy, I am ashamed of you."

Sandy put Mrs. Butler's arms away from his collar and winked imperturbably.

Mrs. Butler recovered her dignity with some show of temper. The glimpse of blue skirt, not now a thing which was passing, but which she might see during the summer, upset her mental balance completely.

"There is surely no necessity," she said, "to adopt a girl because you are executors of a will she was cut out of."

Sandy said there certainly was not, and wished it was time to start.

The train made leisurely show up the line. It came with jarring of brakes and shrill bellow of whistle, jerking slowly to the platform.

A first-class carriage decanted a big girl on the platform; she stood looking about her as a small and wiry maid strove to rouse the apathy of Marty the porter towards the litter of boxes and parcels and sweets and magazines in the carriage.

"I will—I will get them out. If the Lord'd send me tin hands—I will, Mrs. Hennessy. I'm comin'. I cannot say

where ye're cod fish is ; there's for ye now, miss, the bag and the books and all."

Miss Hall Marten merely yawned. She was veiled in a swathing of mauve chiffon—the long mauve coat had the savour of London in its cut. She was somewhat elaborately pretty, and she was looking forward to being bored. As a preliminary to it she yawned once more, before she succeeded in offering a slight portion of her mauve veil to Mrs. Butler's fervent embrace.

"Yes—it was a tirin' journey. Much more so than to Scotland. Oh, of course she's been to Ireland before, both to the Horse Show and to Puncheston, but that was nothin'."

Dennis's stepmother raised her imperious voice to command her son's presence. He came out, shabby, but good to look at, and Miss Hall Marten stopped yawning.

"Dennis," said Mrs. Stepmother, as Dermot had never come, "you will drive back with us to luncheon."

Dennis said politely that he would be delighted to if Carty the coachman could manage to ride his young horse.

Miss Hall Marten smiled a vivacious smile through her mist of blue and said she adored ridin'. "Got three at home," she said, "all thoroughbreds. . . . I want a cigarette."

It was tactless of Dennis to say that quality carried more than bone—for all large people are touchy as to their weight. It was Miss Hall Marten's fancy to imagine herself sylph like.

Mollie Knox, feeling curiously small and lonely, stood waiting for the crowd to clear and their train to start, while Nora was engaged in arguments with Araminta as to the class they would travel by.

With a faint smile Mrs. Acland told Sandy to take third-class tickets. Standish Blundell, who was coming with them, said nothing at all—he merely laughed once, with a rending harshness which upset Araminta's nerves.

The carriages up to Liscannon junction were partially padded; they got into a narrow compartment—scented by the memory of strong tobacco, which Araminta sniffed at haughtily, but they were alone save for an elderly woman who said there was a sight of confusion when trains were goin' an' comin', and that she was all but left behind in the morning because the gyard was asked to hurry up the thrain to catch a weddin' in Cahervalley.

Mollie watched the little platform recede slowly. It was still occupied by a large girl in mauve and a vast pile of expensive luggage. Also by a young man in shabby grey who did not look after the train.

The children pranced upon most parts of the carriage at once with some idea that the more they moved the quicker they would get to the sea.

That evening they intended, apparently, to catch shrimps and crabs, to go boating, to paddle, and gather sea-weed. Miss Brown, with patience born of experience and the knowledge that they would do none of these things, sat meekly in a corner, but Araminta and Hildebrand resented their toes being trampled on and also were foolish enough to become involved in an argument as to the absolute impossibility of doing about ten things at once before dark.

The train grunted and jerked, leaving the more fertile country for a desolate boggy land—running by frowsy hills, and on again to brown-hued wind-swept flats, where the owners of the little squalid cottages hacked a bare livelihood from the bog and rocky slope.

Hildebrand said he now began to understand Ireland and its true poverty.

They changed at Liscannon, Sandy leading them to a long row of box-like carriages, with uncushioned seats and openings running all the way along, so that the confiding of secrets was impossible.

Araminta drank tea at the junction and ate buns. She was generally hungry. She grew thoughtful when she saw

the shining wooden seats, but a hint as to changing their tickets was ignored by Nora, who said firmly that it would be extravagant.

The reek of a strong tobacco drifted along the openings. A crowd of men got into the next carriage, greeting each other cheerily.

"An' how are ye, Misther Harty? How is ye're illustrious self?"

To which Mr. Harty replied, "Right side up, be jabers," and further that he would have satisfaction from Timsy Hanrahan if he missed the train with his parcels. "'There's the flour and the mail, she will be late,' says he to me; 'take your time.' 'She might not be,' says I, and he only walked off without a wurrd."

Fresh greeting for one Flanagan, who came down to them. "How are ye, Dan Flanagan?"

Misther Flanagan, who was full of habit and jolly looking, replied doubtfully that he was not well at all. "I am suffering from a financial sickness," he said, "and no doctor can cure my complaint."

Hildebrand took out his watch. They were already ten minutes late starting.

He called "Guard!" consequently from the window.

A plump and jocund individual turned from a conversation with Mr. Martin Harty, and came to the window.

"Why," asked young Mr. Hannyside, "is the starting of this train delayed?"

The guard looked comprehensively at Martin Harty, and then smiled happily.

"We might be a trifle late," he said pleasantly, "but sure, in the passage of the day what is the mather of a handful of minnits."

Hildebrand got in his surprise to the platform to explain their value. At that moment a leisurely youth, with several parcels, was pounced on by the guard. "There is that vilyin Timsy," he said. "All in with ye now. All right Misther Harty—saved agin."

Timsy, hustled on to the van, was fiercely informed by Harty that the face would be cut from him when next he was encountered. And Hildebrand, in the excitement, was all but left behind—to be flung in through the half open door by a station-master, who reproved him severely for his unpunctuality. "Next time ye'll miss it," said that official, banging the door. Hildebrand sat silent, crushed by so much injustice.

The country they ran into now was wilder still. The hills grew blacker, towering high above them; they steamed past brown-hued streams rippling and rushing in deep glens, or sliding smoothly through stretches of bog. They jerked up at the tiny stations with jars which brought home the hardness of the seats.

A fair was taking place at Renvoyle—the platform was crowded, and the third-class carriages grew crammed. Araminta howled with terror when some of these fresh arrivals, getting into the carriage behind the party from Cahervalley, came with a reek of fiery spirits, and after an interval of song, found quarrelling more entertaining, so that sticks whirled and words grew thick. The whirl of a thick blackthorn above the opening made Araminta hysterical; she sprang upon the seat with some idea of climbing for safety into the compartment of Mr. Harty and his friends, but that gentleman's genial "Come on so, miss, we'll help ye in," made her get down again and wail "Police" faintly.

Sandy said nothing, but Miss Brown had extreme difficulty in preventing Alexander from catching at the sticks as they whirled, with his shrimp net.

Araminta and Hildebrand both upbraided the Aclands and Standish for their indifference; and the bump of stoppage at the next station was marked by the frenzied descent of Miss Mellicombe and her rush to the station-master, wailing that several people were murdering each other next door.

The station-master and porter remarked, "Bedam to it

and she late already," but showed instant interest in the hopes of excitement. "Murder is it? Did ye see it, miss? Which ones?"

"There!" gasped Araminta dramatically.

At that moment, four large men, supporting each other, proceeded from the door of the carriage Araminta pointed to. One of them had a black eye, and another a cut on his cheek, but they were all happily united in a desire for fresh stimulant.

"Is it that party—the O'Sheas and the M'Caskys? They had a little drink taken, maybe. For the love of God, Tony, get in the eggs for Travee. Not what, Miss? Let them escape. Look for what? The dead one—God, help us, there is no dead one. Be aisy with ye're funnin', miss."

Dragged to the door of the carriage to peer into its slightly bloodstained emptiness, the official said peevishly that he had no time for corpses and nonsense with eggs and luggage on his mind, and Araminta, bewailing the hideous callousness of his nature, was shoved back to her carriage threatening to stop the train by the use of the cord if she found a dead man herself.

"Ye cannot, because the cord is broke! Give her the bell, Tony—let her off."

Unsatisfied, Araminta mounted on the seat to peer fearfully over the division into an empty compartment. She sat down at last, and looked thoughtful.

"I begin to think," said Araminta, "that the Irish are all mad."

Nora, patiently enduring the fumes of twist tobacco, said she had understood that Araminta found them so reasonable and sensible.

Araminta replied gloomily that she would return in a first-class carriage.

"We get out here," said Nora, as they steamed into a busy station.

The rest of their journey was in a steam tramway,

running along the high road. A weird little line, diving in and out its rails to pigs and children and dogs; its surface scarred with innumerable iron cow-catchers; its pace that of an average hack.

But at one side was the sea—wide stretch of green-blue waters, heaving restlessly, breaking softly over reaches of golden sand; at the other, huge hills towered, black and splendid, frowning down at the atoms of humanity which came crawling past them. Tracks of mountain torrents scarred the sides; more brown-hued rivers crawled low in their rock-strewn beds, whispering of the hours when they would foam mightily in torrent to the ocean. Here and there the sun touched the sea to silver, the sands to fine gold; laid light patches on the dark mountain sides. They crawled inland, panting with open throttle along the side of the steep, hanging over the edge of a mountain stream far below, creeping over dizzy bridges—up, and ever up.

"It ran away down here once," said Nora; "the brakes wouldn't hold the train, and it rushed on and on until it was over just here"—she pointed at the bridge they were crossing—"so now," she added, "they are ordered to stop every minute on the way down. It does make it slow, of course, Hildebrand, but you wouldn't like to be like the pigs, would you?"

"Like what?" said Hildebrand, scenting offence.

"Like the pigs," said Nora. "Didn't I say it was pigs went over? They were bringing them down to Travee."

The splendour of the hills grew greater. They were in a little unreal railway crawling through the might of the world. A puny piece of daring, setting its little rails on the sides of the steeps, lost in stretches of wild rise and fall, coming back to the road for company lest it should lose heart and get blotted out, left by itself. Stopping at toy stations, panting past carts and cows, whirling little children from its carefully speeded way. Blowing whistles even at foolish ducks and hens which strayed upon its path, and blowing almost apologetically, as if in recogni-

tion of the fact that it had no right up the highway, but had come there because it grew so lonely out in the country side.

They toiled and toiled. Hildebrand resented the absence of the motor; Araminta squeaked whenever she looked out, because she was quite sure they must kill something. "Without a fence, with nothing to protect anything," said Araminta; "and oh, if it did run backwards and made pigs of us all."

The fear of the descent held her dumb as they crawled down towards a sunlit sea. Frowning cliffs dipped their dark feet into surges of translucent green. Surf thundered on flat, golden sands. White sandhills raised their powdery green-flecked crests. Away across the bay the chocolate-hued Killarney mountains could be seen, dark against the evening sky. The air blew fresh and clean and sweet, heather-scented, salt-laden.

But both Hildebrand and Araminta, as they considered the landscape on their way from the station, looked at it all doubtfully. They asked why there was no pier, and what people found to do at Inchleigh.

"They can be glad that they are alive," said Nora quietly, looking out at the restless waters.

The little house which belonged to the Aclands crouched on a jutting cliff above the bay. It was too small to hold them all, so Hildebrand was told to get rooms at the hotel, a command which troubled him greatly.

"It is quite a decent hotel," said Sandy, "and they'll oblige you with a room. We know the people——"

The children rushed forth to try to do a variety of things at once. Found the tide was too high to shrimp, the sea too rough to fish on, the water quite chilly when they walked into it, and, as patient Miss Brown confidently hoped, they came in for the tea they had absolutely refused to take, and went off to bed full of strict resolutions as to getting up at six next morning.

"Call the children at eight, Maria," said Miss Brown

placidly. Hildebrand, meantime, was really beginning to know Ireland. He went alone to the pretty little hotel, asked its prices for a small bed, and came out discontentedly. He was aggrieved at being put to extra expense. Strolling on down the little streets, he came to a pinkly distempered house, which also proclaimed itself hotel. Here Hildebrand decided he would find cheapness. It was a little stuffy when he got inside; the odours from the bar were mingled: but he found the prices reasonable.

A fat and amiable-looking landlady showed him a bedroom, remarking dubiously that there was a sight ov people down for the Sunday. "If ye had to share it, just for the night," she said coaxingly; "if there was a rush now?"

Hildebrand remarked, with extreme decision, that he would share nothing. He settled the price, engaged his resting-place, and left, sped by sweet smiles from the landlady, called into the other hotel to say he would not want a room, and he went back to dinner.

Here he was reticent as to his arrangements. He rated Araminta for smoking several cigarettes. He called her white dress an extravagance for the seaside. He was inclined to quarrel, and Araminta never failed to meet him half way. They wrangled, as usual, as to their respective inheritances, the injustice of their uncle's will. Hildebrand hinted that the Reverend Eustace was a person of small influence and smaller principal, or he would counsel Araminta to give up her share of a racing stable. Araminta, fingering her jet chain, thought less than *nothing* of Greater Bethel and its teaching.

"Nice ducks and drakes you'd make of Northlap," grumbled Hildebrand, "if you lived there."

"Better than making half the rooms into spiders' webs," retorted Araminta, "as you would, and never supporting the church there or helping any one who didn't tune forks."

"It is an eager an a nipping air," said Standish Blundell sadly.

Sandy said that Shakespeare had got into Standish's head.

"It was the aunt," said Standish. "She read five plays to me; I got quite fond of them afterwards."

The ceaseless beating of the sea upon the sands made every one sleepy. At ten Standish got up to go to the hotel; he had engaged a room there and took Hildebrand with him. He wondered as they walked down the sandy road, with the fresh saltiness of the sea stinging coldly, why that youth tried to avoid him and stay behind.

"Was it to make it up with Pepperminta?" said Standish in his deep voice.

It was unkind of Sandy's eldest son to have gravely christened his guests Pepperminta and Fatahanda.

Hildebrand, studying the lights twinkling in the houses, took his bearings, and bade Standish a curt good-night.

"The hotel which I was directed to," he said stiffly, "wished to charge me a ridiculous sum. I found a respectable and cleanly inn down this way kept by a nice, obliging woman, who gave me the best room she could find."

Standish lost all desire to sleep. With new-born friendliness he attended Hildebrand to his resting-place. "I'll see you settled down," he said. "I must."

The hostelry of Hildebrand's choosing seemed to have filled up to overflowing. A medley of voices poured from the open door on the wings of the odours of strong drink. Some one sang a song which nobody listened to, though the singer interposed loud demands for chorus at the end of every verse.

The landlady looked on with an obliging smile, which thinned faintly when she saw Hildebrand.

"He is back," she confided to some one.

"A most obliging woman," said Hildebrand to Standish; "took the greatest trouble."

"She does that for every one," said Standish softly.

"Mary Kate—Andy," said Mrs. O'Shea, observing Hildebrand, "here is the gentleman for No. 6. He is airy."

Hildebrand backed from the unsanctimonious odours. He looked dubiously at a red-headed youth who possibly shaved on Sundays, and he asked for a candle.

"A sight of people," said Mrs. O'Shea blandly, "landed in on me to-night. I did my best," she said to Hildebrand, "but, sure, heads will have beds. Will ye have any objection now to sleeping with a most respectable solicitor from Travee."

The deepening horror on Hildebrand's face made her smile deepen to positive witchery.

Standish coughed quietly, but made no comment.

"A nate, agreeable man he is," she said. "I sorted him out for ye. An' he should sleep sound. His own mother was a Delaney. There he is, getting sleepy."

The descendant of the house of Delaney was seated on a rickety chair, with his feet on the rungs of another. He was clearly not thinking of law; in fact he was the songster who had called vainly for chorus.

"Whin we're short," said Mrs. O'Shea, seeing her guest's expression, "we can put three in the gran' bed above that I gave ye. I could have to-night, but I knows the gintry is particular, so there's but two of ye. A most respectable——"

But Hildebrand had rushed upstairs for his bag. He came down gripping it, and fled into the night, to beg for any corner they would give him to lie in at the Inchleigh Arms.

"That was a nice sort of an inn you chose," said Standish mildly, as he kept pace with Hildebrand's flying steps. "You'd never be lonesome for the smell of porter all night anyhow."

Hildebrand gained what repose he could on a hard sofa.

Soft sunshine fell on Inchleigh in the morning. The clear white crested rollers, memory of a day-old storm, whipping them, came, growing drowsy as they languidly rushed to cream on the firm sands, or froth and fume against the cliffs. The mountains towered above them, shutting

out cold north winds, fading tints of purple and brown to a pink where the heather bloomed. Fuchsias drooped their crimson bells in the hedges.

The beach was soon covered with bathers, who dipped and ducked and screamed in time-honoured fashion.

With a "Wet ye're poll, Katie, or ye'll get a lightness in it. Wet it, I tell ye, girl. Dip, let ye, Susie. Dip, lovey. Is it sand baths ye are out for, Lucy? Oh ah! Oh ah! Maria, is it the wather cruel cold and it running up ye? I axe ye're pardin', Mrs. Malone. Ma'am, I never meant to thrip ye; but sure ye're dipped now, anyways."

But Nora knew a little cove, sheltered and sunny, with deep sand for its carpet, and a cave for dressing in, when they all went to bathe.

Araminta, radiant in scarlet, with sandals and a coquettish cap, dabbled in two feet of salt water as she recounted what a fine swimmer she was. Nora dropped from a rock into cool green depths and struck off out to where the rollers lifted her as if she had been a cork, with Standish swimming watchfully close by. Sandy had never quite learnt the mastery of the waters, so swam more cautiously in the creek; the children made various efforts to drown themselves; and Hildebrand, considering mixed bathing most improper, watched them glumly from the cliff.

The children splashed happily in the shallows, and the dogs, having bathed themselves into wisps and rolled a great many times in the sand to get dry, then went to sleep on Miss Mellicombe's clothes, which were coyly hidden behind a rock. Delia kept guard over Nora's.

It was unfortunate that on his way back from his swim Standish should have cannoned against Araminta, who was poised coquettishly on a rock, and upset that carefully attired damsel face down into the sea. Also that, instead of showing contrition, he should merely have quoted "Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia," as he watched her struggle to the shallows and fly to dress.

A long shriek marked the discovery of the dogs, and her

robing was punctuated by constant bobbings of a head above the rocks, with furious comments concerning "sand in everything. Sand in my blouse, in my stockings, down my back," wailed Araminta. "Also they have scratched and torn my——" Here she disappeared.

"Dear Nunky Hildie," said Alexander, coming up to hang about Hildebrand's neck and upset a large quantity of shells over him, "you doesn't bathe an' get cross."

"He gets cross—nother times," said Kathleen, with the sapiency of woman.

Hildebrand's return to the lodge, where a luncheon of mackerel and chicken was ready, was marred by the appearance of a grimy envelope containing a bill upon flimsy paper, the youth who carried it demanding an answer:

"O'Shea's Hotel. One bedroome and attendance 4 shillin'. N.B.—Two gentlemin disappointed, so must ask for this."

Hildebrand looked at it disdainfully, until Standish counselled him to pay.

"With advice from the law in your very bed, she must know it's right," said Standish.

There was peace in the little seaside place. Peace, hand in hand with mighty appetites.

Standish quoted several times that he knew a bank whereon the wild thyme grew, and also other quotations, which he never got quite correctly, as to the dreadful summit of the cliff. "And then something about beetles," said Standish sadly, "when one knows it ought to be shrimps; but Hamlet was a queer chap."

The arrival of Phillips and the car opened up the world to them; they went round the heads and away to other coasts of golden sands and jutting rocks, of purple distances and wind-swept-over heaving seas.

"But I fear," said Hildebrand, his mind running on his inheritance, "that Watson may neglect the horses during our absence."

CHAPTER XI

Incensed the seas and shores, against your peace.

—*Tempest.*

HILDEBRAND HANNYSIDE opened a letter and bounced upon his seat. He said, "My goodness gracious me," three times.

Sandy's son and heir, looking at him reproachfully, remarked that all his shrimps were upset into his jam, but that he supposed he had better try them together on hot cakes.

"Mr. Grimes and Mr. Jones are in Ireland! they are at Killarney," said Hildebrand, "with Miss Grimes. They can come on here. Phillips, get me a form. Phillips, send a telegram for me at once, please, Phillips," commanded Hildebrand, producing sixpence and writing rapidly.

"Ninepence halfpenny, sir," said Phillips gravely. "Thank you, sir, one halfpenny still, sir. Much obliged, sir."

"And as we have got Mr. Allenbury," said Nora, "our last few days will be congested. There are some papers to be attended to," she added, seeing Araminta glare.

"All paid for," said Araminta sourly, "in our account with him."

Miss Knox then opened a letter which she had read several times, but made no comment. But after breakfast she changed her dress for one of pale blue, and chose a hat of airy fashion.

When his telegram had been dispatched, Hildebrand hovered on the verge of expectancy through a long, showery morning. Towards luncheon-time he went rushing to meet a telegraph boy, and announced in tones which

smacked of awe that his friends were coming over from Killarney for the next day. "They will motor," he said. "And," he looked almost ingratiatingly at Nora, "if we arranged a picnic to Slavin Head—somewhere near—I will of course help to provide."

Nora promised him a picnic somewhat drily, though at breakfast, luncheon, and whenever he could find any one to listen to him, Hildebrand talked with nervous anxiety. He begged Araminta not to smoke, he enlarged on the staid virtues of his elders, and he entreated Standish not to quote Shakespeare.

"Mr. Grimes considers him coarse. He preached on it once. He said there was a bald honesty of phrasing which was positively indelicate. He said it was really worse than Swinburne."

"My aunts," said Standish, "drew the line at Swinburne. Tell me, now," said Standish, beaming across the table, "what did he say of Don Juan? I've heard of that, and did he preach on the——"

But Hildebrand coldly left the room.

"The more you read the more you can talk of," observed Standish, sadly relapsing to his breakfast.

The Castleknock cook knew the obligations of the sea. Mounds of hot cakes, the hopes of dozens of hens, pounds of bacon, occupied her toward morning hours.

"An', God save us, but just enough," she would remark happily to the parlourmaid, as they cleared away.

Any levity of dress which Hildebrand had permitted himself was changed for sombre mourning; he came forth in sober black. His straw hat replaced by a bowler, his brown boots by those of jetty hue.

He stood expectantly upon the sandy road, where a cheerfully spiteful wind swept up wheels of sand inside his collar until the noisiness of a hired motor proclaimed its throbbing approach.

Before this he had been to the village shop; sundry knobby parcels had arrived as his share of lunch.

Sandy, looking out of the window, saw Hildebrand eagerly greeting the two stout old gentlemen whom they had seen at Euston, and a buxom girl, disguised behind a motor-veil. When she untied it she revealed a beaming pink-cheeked face, china-blue eyes, and frizzy fair hair.

Miss Grimes did not seem to have been subdued by the religion of Greater Bethel—she was really pleased with life, and her staple speech was, "Oh, delightful!" grafted into a giggle. Sometimes she varied it by "Most delightful!" but that was only when the rules of grammar forbade the "Oh."

"Miss Grimes—Mr. Acland," introduced Hildebrand impulsively. Sandy trusted that Miss Grimes liked Ireland.

"Oh, delightful," said Susannah Grimes, giggling.

He hoped she had not found Killarney too hot.

"No, delightful," said Susannah.

Her elders stretched their stout limbs and accepted milk and soda. Mr. Jones took a little whisky in it and left out the milk in deference to some cheese savoury which had not agreed with him. Mr. Grimes added brandy and an egg and left out the soda.

After this they were introduced to every one, and were charmed to go forth upon a picnic to Slavin Head.

Standish and Hildebrand were to bicycle. The overflow of the Aclands party travelled on a hired car, and presently, from the disconsolate aspect of the chauffeur's face when he raised it from inside the hireling's bonnet, it appeared that Mr. Jones and Mr. Grimes must do the same.

"To be mending her," said the driver fiercely, "is like tying up hot butter with bits of string," and he took out some tools viciously.

On Hildebrand's asking, "What is it?" the chauffeur returned, "My laws, what isn't it?" with a screw-wrench held in his teeth.

The setting forth of a picnic was of a certain sameness.

It was marked by an array of baskets coming forth to be packed in, and the heated fears of the cook as to her powers of memory.

"Mr. Phillips! The Lord save us, is the cream forgot?"

Mr. Phillips could not say.

"For the love of heaven, Mr. Phillips, send your hand in under the cakes and see. I packed it there, in its tin at all, to be safe, between the ginger-loaf and the cold scones. Arrah! Mary Kate, take the basket off him."

"'Tis in, 'tis all right, 'tis in my basket here, Mrs. Cafferty. 'Tis leakin' down me apern," shrieked Mary Kate, the parlourmaid, "and there's spots on Mr. Phillips, too."

This, followed by a dignified adjustment of the cork by Phillips, and a further wail from Mrs. Cafferty to announce that there was the tay oberight her eyes, that she would swhear was up an' packed.

Yet somehow most of the things generally got to the picnic.

It was decided to give the jarvey cars a start. That hired by Mr. Jones, drawn by a pig-eyed grey horse with big feet, had left, when a distant whistle rang eerily.

"Who—next!" said Sandy. "Nora—the Butlers—here—what." He stood open-mouthed.

The Butlers' immaculate tourer, pale cream in hue, came slowly into view, Dermot driving, with Miss Hall Marten beside him, Dennis and his stepmother at the back.

"What—ever brings you here?" finished Sandy, as the car stopped. Mrs. Butler, looking a little wildly at sea and beach, said sonorously that she wished she knew, she really wished it. It appeared they had started for a drive from Rossleigh; they were at Rossleigh Hotel, and had wanted to get to Travee and so home, and they were—here."

"The maps," said Dermot, with unmixed gravity, "are

most difficult to understand. I did think the car went on too long, but the map confused me."

"And you never asked any one," said his mother reproachfully—"none of the country people."

"Dennis," said Dermot, "also had a map."

Dermot was out of the car talking to Miss Knox. Nora looked comprehensively at the blue dress and hat, and then at the map in Dennis's hands. Then she smiled.

As they had lost their way, she suggested the Butlers joining the picnic. The drive was beautiful, the day perfect.

Mrs. Butler replied haughtily that they must get on and back, and was checked by her son, who feared that something with a long name needed adjustment. "It would take us for a few miles," he said doubtfully, looking with a knowing eye at the radiator; "but, etc., etc."

Miss Hall Marten, very elaborately got up for motoring in pearly grey down to shoes and stockings, said, with a yawn, that the place was quite pretty, and they'd better see it.

"Salt and sand," yawned Miss Hall Marten. "Garden of Eden on sea and so forth—let's stay."

Mrs. Butler sat in the cream-coloured car and failed to understand why maps should be wrong. Why they should have found themselves at Inchleigh so suddenly, coming right upon the Aclands? She could at least send the map to the makers and ask for explanation.

She was still wrapt in infuriated wonder when a fresh start was made. She had even left the door of the Aclands' cottage before she realized that Phillips, having gently laid in a forgotten basket, took his place at her side and requested politely to be excused.

"Mr. Dennis, madam, just gone on on the outside car; asked me to send a telegram and pick him up, madam."

"Who," thundered Mrs. Butler, "would Mr. Dennis wish to telegraph to?"

"I do not recollect, madam," said Phillips truthfully ; "merely the sum, half-a-crown, madam."

Here Phillips looked thoughtfully at a silver piece in his hand.

It was of course unfortunate that the second outside car took a precipitous hill road. Turning off before the motor came up, the sturdy pony plodded up a hill, its hoofs scrambling and scraping, which no motor would have cared to face. On the brow they overtook the other party with the pig-eyed grey sternly refusing to face the descent.

"'Tis the way her hindmost leg is bad on him," said the driver ; "and the gentry being fearsome, I cannot gallop. If ye would but sit up and be thrustful to me, yer honer, I'd settle her. If we drag her down though, she'll be apt to kick," he added unhappily.

The hill was a sheer descent, carved out of the mountain, with a loose, treacherous surface, sharp corners, and a convenient cliff of grass to slip over on one side. The two elderly gentlemen might have been excused for declining to address it at a furious gallop.

Hildebrand, it appeared, had insisted on this road being taken. He had toiled up it himself, melting as he came, with his patent leather boots growing fiery on his feet, and his bowler hat appearing to act as focus for the sun's rays.

At one side the sea gleamed and flashed blue and glorious. Beyond, the hills tossed and flung their arms against the sky. The air was full of soft scent of honeysuckle, the banks were fresh with heather, stained by red fuchsia tassel, but the pig-eyed grey spoilt the landscape.

"Is—it—not—lovely?" panted Hildebrand.

"Oh, delightful," said Miss Grimes, a little nervously.

The pig-eyed grey responded to a smite on his quarters by "hoisting" nastily. He went four shuffling steps down the slope, and then into the ditch with a sidelong bound.

Mr. Jones asked plaintively how far it would be if they walked.

"Let ye sit up," said Mike the driver. "Sit up and I'll see ye don't walk. 'Tis six mile, solid."

Perhaps it was an extempore prayer which Mr. Jones said as he got on the car and committed his life doggedly to Mike's charge.

"If ye are kilt blame me," said Mike, raising his stick. "I knows her, the vilyin."

The pig-eyed grey endured about a dozen stripes and then recognised defeat. With his spavined and curly hocks bending beneath him he fled into the abyss, the car rocking at his heels.

"Didn't I tell ye I'd settle her?" said Mike. "Lay hould, Missy."

"For Heaven's sake. For Mercy's sake, easy," wailed Mr. Jones and Mr. Grimes.

"If I aises him he will kick," said Mike, "she is a rogue from her mother's tit that grey. I'll heartin ye," he added as they swung round a corner on one wheel, with a precipitous heather clad fall, completely unfenced, at one side of the road.

Mr. Grimes wiped his brow. He looked sadly back towards something black which was visible on the hill.

"I trust," he said to his daughter, "that Hildebrand has not grown wild over here."

"Oh, delightful," said Susannah jerkily. "Oh man, we were just over."

"An inch of a miss is as good as a mile," returned Mike placidly.

"I greatly fear it," said Mr. Grimes stiffly. "His face is so flushed and his clothes are absurd."

"Didn't I say I'd land ye there?" said Mike proudly, pulling up the smoking animal, which was he or she as Mike foresaid. "Here ye are. He will go back well enough."

The elders of Greater Bethel got down with manifest

relief. They were uneasily prepared to be shocked by the worldlings they had come amongst, but they were not so narrow-minded as Hildebrand would have made them out. Suspicion of Ireland and the Irish was their chief idea.

Luncheon was laid out then on a carpet of heather; the mountains towered behind them, the sea could be seen far below.

"It seems about everywhere here. How delightful," said Miss Grimes. She went off to look for white heather with Dennis, who, having shed his fawn coat, shone forth in flannels of sickly green. He showed a distinct desire to avoid his mother; that lady sitting in the majesty of perplexed offence upon a pile of cushions. Miss Hall Marten smoked cigarettes and yawned intermittently, "All outdoors," she said, "was very tryin'."

Phillips and Miss Brown did all the work, occasionally assisted by the children and the dogs; the former managed to put down an apple pie upside down, and the latter successfully annexing half a cold duck.

Miss Mellicombe, posed nymphlike on a rock, invited attention to her purple shoes, and read "Self Denial" by the Rev. Arthur Eustace.

"I only trust," said Mr. Grimes, "I trust, Mr. Acland, that my friend Hildebrand has not *changed* over here."

"He has not," said Sandy with emphasis.

"The influence," said Mr. Grimes, unconvinced, "the wild air. His good nature might induce a mingling with the people."

"I have done no such thing," said Hildebrand loftily.

His patent leather boots seemed to have shrunk by two sizes since he started, his complexion was mostly purple; the bowler appeared to be made of iron across the forehead. Also, his snowy collar had grown limp.

Hildebrand wrestled for coolness with this imputation of his elders, drawing it away successfully.

"I dislike the people," he said. "I find them sober

and not 'funny. I would not mix with them, the wretches. . . ."

"My Laws—there now," said Mike. "In she is. Into the green bog. God save us."

"Miss Grimes," said Phillips, who was among the salad dressing. "I trust there is no danger, sir."

Susannah was being reft by Dennis from the grimy embraces of a treacherous piece of slime.

She came in jerks to safety, with her feet and ankles streaming with liquid mud.

"Gracious. Oh never mind. It's delightful," said Miss Grimes.

"Stupid thing bog," yawned Miss Hall Marten, watching. "Give her a cigarette."

"I see an ass near to drown there once," said Mike to Patsy his fellow.

"The craythur," said Patsy.

Phillips, full of resource, suggested that Miss Grimes should take off her stockings to let them be washed and dried in the sun.

Miss Grimes, the fortunate possessor of pretty feet, accepted the situation blandly, giggling gently when her father, shocked by the occurrence, took a table napkin from the basket and strapped it about her ankles.

"Did you ever see any one so good humoured in your life?" said Dermot to his stepbrother. "Now, did you? I've splashed all my flannels too getting her out."

Dennis looked at a small blur of blue perched on a rock and sighed. Miss Knox, assuredly enough, had not proved very good humoured. Miss Hall Marten's somewhat tired good looks appeared to focus Mollie's eyes. Mollie had asked Dennis if he'd learnt heaps about society, and if he didn't think tall girls were more attractive than small, and she was generally peppery.

Lunch had commenced when another hack car topped the rise. It carried an elderly gentleman in dark blue, who waved to them eagerly.

"Gracious! I'd forgotten Mr. Allenbury," said Nora. "He came on the train."

Mr. Allenbury walked actively across the lumpy ground. He raved as to air and sea and mountains. He told Hildebrand that he had grown fat, and he hoped Araminta liked Ireland.

"Extraordinary," he said, "the fascination of racing; you two now, couldn't let your horses out of your sight, and at first you were against it."

Mr. Grimes looked with fresh surprise at Hildebrand. Lobster, ginger beer, hot air and patent leather had painted that blameless youth a generous crimson-lake.

The elders drank Perrier at lunch. Grimes, whose wittiness was tempered by a saving sense of humour, explained in an undertone to Sandy that he never obeyed his doctor's orders in public.

"Elderly men," he murmured, "require a little stimulant, but before youth I preserve example."

"You *know*, Allenbury," said Hildebrand peevishly, "you know I own this stud under protest. To please my dead uncle," stormed Hildebrand, "who, if he could rise from his grave——"

"Oh, delightful!" said Miss Grimes, alluding to a helping of chicken. "I like bones, really; yes, delightful."

Hildebrand turned a countenance of fiery pain upon Susannah Grimes; he sighed, and said he thought she was unkind.

"But you really love 'em, horses I mean," said Allenbury, "both of you. And I hear you go racing, Hildebrand, and get taken for bookies, and ride."

"In an awful state for riding," boomed Mrs. Butler deeply. "An affair which might have been a tragedy is not one to discuss with levity, Mr.—er—Allenbury. If he had fallen under the wheel instead of on to me for instance, poor youth."

Mr. Jones, worthy preacher and elder, got up slowly. He looked at sea and mountain, then he looked at Hildebrand, then he sighed.

"I have argued many times that any association with horse racing would drive any one to the—er—ahem—well—devil," said Mr. Jones grimly. "The influences of our little meeting-house are, I fear, deeply needed."

"Funny places, aren't they?" yawned Miss Hall Marten. "All go as you please and talkin' out of your heads, don't you, and all frightfully good, aren't you? Have a cigarette?"

"I do not smoke," said Mr. Jones stiffly.

"Pity," said Miss Hall Marten, "soothin', y'know; they wouldn't make you sick."

Sunshine, lobster, duck and many other things combined with clear fresh air coming softly over sea and mountain, make the middle-aged sleepy and the young unduly active. They were driving on for tea. Mrs. Butler put the hood up and went to sleep in her car. Sandy, Nora, and Mr. Allenbury chose a spot sheltered by a jutting rock carpeted by springing heather, and sat there smoking.

The young people wandered off about the hills, and Miss Hall Marten getting up called to Mollie.

"Come and see Ozones unlimited with me," she said with a yawn. "London's really much fresher, isn't it?"

Mollie shook her blue hat.

"Really is," said Evelina, "electric fans, an' somethin' to do. Don't know why I came here, mother made me, said I was run down. Beastly birds all day, doin' choir practice at five, and gettin' on to mouth organs o' nights. Goin' home soon," said Miss Hall Marten, "thank goodness, I like Dennis though," she added. "Have a cigarette?"

"Oh, indeed," said Mollie stiffly.

"Not a bad boy. If he had some money and clothes, might ask him to England next year, or over for the cubbin'. Great treat for him, eh?"

"Great, of course," said Mollie, pulling up heather ruthlessly.

Miss Hall Marten had been down, she said languidly, the place made her giddy, and having powdered her face carefully, she strolled away yawning to look for Dennis. When Dennis slipped from behind some boulders to join a small figure in blue, it was quite five minutes before he got anything but "yes" or "no" for a reply.

Mollie would not admire the view; she would not look for white heather; she would not walk on across the hills to the trysting-place for tea.

She said she was sure that Dennis was very tired of country life, and would really be happier in a town. She went lightly across tussocks and hills back to the others, and removed Dermot from admiring Miss Grimes's feet.

Miss Grimes, screaming pleasantly, then joined the Aclands.

"How delightful," she said, sitting down, "place all little tickles, oh, delightful"—and she held up a pretty bare foot.

Behind the face of this exclamation lay occasional items of information. They learned something of the dullness of Lesser Cheriton, and the austerity of the Greater Bethelites. There Hildebrand, it appeared, was almost painfully good. At this point Mr. Grimes woke up and joined them, and they went on: Mr. Grimes said they had hoped that Hildebrand would yet lead the order. Now that riches were thrust on him, they were full of expectations.

"That is—if——" said Mr. Grimes—"there is an alteration in appearance. My cousin and I are nervous; there are several worthy youth in Lesser Cheriton." Here he looked meaningly at Susannah. "But riches have power for good."

Hildebrand limped painfully into sight. Delicacy, which he felt sure would be appreciated and understood, had kept him away from Miss Grimes's bared feet, but seeing her seated on a mound, with their whiteness gleaming unveiled against the moss, he thought that he might join the

group. Susannah's round blue eyes grew thoughtful as he stumbled and limped along. She showed no undue pleasure, but made anxious inquiries for her shoes and stockings. She appeared to grow suddenly weary of sitting still. Hildebrand tried to forget his boots as he looked at Miss Grimes's peachy cheeks, and he stood beside her.

"Your arrival here," he said, "was a great and unexpected joy."

"Oh, delightful," said Miss Grimes absently. "We'd settled weeks ago about Killarney."

"I have been weary," said Hildebrand rather loudly, so that every one should hear, "away, forced away from the life I crave. Forced among horses."

"Yes, *delightful*," said Miss Grimes eagerly.

Mr. Grimes hoped in heartiest tones that the future winner of the National was not like the grey jarvey horse.

"To my mind," said Hildebrand, "all horses are alike. For example, I could not have told whether the one I rode once was black or grey or white."

The elder looked at a large dark cliff on the mountain.

"As bad as that," he said, in what he believed to be a whisper. "Oh, Susannah. My dear child."

Mr. Allenbury put a piece of heather hurriedly into his mouth, and tried to pretend it choked him. Standish brayed without comment, and Hildebrand's face grew purple red.

"Stockings, miss, quite dry," said Phillips, coming up; "shoes still exceedingly damp, require new lace, miss, very sticky."

Miss Grimes, executing a dexterous wheeling movement, put on her stockings; the wet shoes were extremely troublesome. She walked in one until Dermot Butler and Mollie arrived, and then Dermot had to come over to help her. It took quite an appreciable time to get both on, Miss Grimes saying, "Oh, thank you, delightful," at each

pull. Hildebrand, who had gone hurriedly away when Phillips came with stockings, now returned to remark at length that he feared the shoes were tight.

With sudden, curious ease Miss Grimes slipped her feet in. "Tight shoes," she said, "spoil the feet."

"And yours don't want to look smaller than they are," said Dermot, proving his nationality.

"So dreadfully hot," said Miss Hall Marten, as they woke her up. "Was dreaming I was at the Carlton for supper; lots of air there, always. No heather, no bees; charmin'."

The party packed itself up to move on for tea; this, for a change, was to be partaken of on the seashore.

During the packing Sandy listened to Miss Grimes giving some further information as to Hildebrand's mother. Occasionally, it appeared, the young lady got beyond the chorus of "Oh, delightful."

"She was gooder than good, also delightful," said Miss Grimes. "He takes it all from her, you see. Yes. She wanted to preach, you know, in the tabernacle, but they said she'd giggle. Oh she never let Hildebrand go anywhere, and he had a maid, or a man when he grew up to go to his uncle's. She was really too good to live, so she died. Oh, delightful," said Miss Grimes.

"No doubt," said Sandy in the background.

Miss Grimes hurriedly, and with a cheerful giggle, said she meant delightful to apply to the goodness.

"Oh, not her being dead," said Susannah. "She did that in a rage because a maid stayed out till ten. She felt it so much she had a fit. Oh, de——"

Here Miss Grimes closed her mouth firmly before the "lightful" made its way out.

The pig-eyed grey started, with a glance which was a blend of malice and resignation fixed on his driver's whip. Wedged in between two other cars, he made a virtue of necessity, and plodded unwillingly along the road.

Mrs. Butler, waking up sleepily bewildered with the

indigestion which picnic luncheons are responsible for, could not understand why a buxom maiden with china-blue eyes should now occupy the seat by her son Dermot, and Miss Hall Marten yawn peacefully at her hostess's side.

"Dennis?" said his stepmother inquiringly.

"Walkin' over mountains," yawned Miss Hall Marten, "or drivin' on an outside car, or somewhere," finished the young lady sleepily. "No use offerin' you a cigarette?"

The elders of Greater Bethel muttered to each other across the well of the car as they drove on. They were not satisfied about something.

Hildebrand and Standish, the bicyclists, had started first, for Standish knew a short cut across the mountain which he advised taking.

The short cut included a cart track laid on sharp-cut stones, with bog lands at either side. It was impossible to ride on, and the patent leather boots were red-hot casings of iron on Hildebrand's feet. His colour deepened as his temper shortened. When at length he climbed painfully on to his bicycle, he announced drearily that he would ride across Hades rather than get off again.

He saw no beauty in crisp turf, bejewelled with eye-bright; in brown spotted rocks, heather smothered; in tangle of sweet honeysuckle; in lush ferns peering from shady nooks, with fairy bell plants beside them; in gurgle of turf-coloured mountain streams, as they whispered to the banks of the days when the rain made them potential torrents; of smoky distances, mist veiled across the restless sea. To him it was a bare and torturing road, fit only for goats.

"If the brakes hold," said Standish sadly, looking over the brim of the track, "you may keep it up."

They bumped and slid between high rocks until their laneway turned out on to a better road. It wheeled on it at a steep descent leading to the sea, past a small cluster of

houses. Several men, having probably caught some fish in the morning, were playing pitch-and-toss in the road.

The bicycles had gained a giddy speed. Hildebrand at another time would have shouted as well as rung his bell; in his peevish humour he clicked at the bell, found it partially out of order, and rode on in careless wrath.

His "Hi, there! you fools!" coming several seconds too late, the result was a jarring collision with a gigantic black-haired man, who yelled, dashed his hand against his face, and removed it stained with red.

Some part of the machine had peeled a large patch of skin off the countryman's cheek, and another had partially closed one eye.

"There's for you now," said Standish, as a wave of angry men engulfed Hildebrand, and he himself stood hidden behind a rock.

"Stravegin' down the hill without a word. In on the top of us. Killin' dacent min as if the road was yours!" they shouted.

Here Hildebrand, finding an opening, did not improve matters by declaiming that it was certainly not theirs to play pitch-and-toss on.

"Countin' our airnin's," said a spokesman loftily. "Countin' 'em quiet an' dacent. An' Magennis without a face now to see with."

Hildebrand gurgled in his throat. One does not usually count money by spinning it upwards, with a yell of "Heads!"—but he grew confused and frightened. If he had been apologetical he would have been taken in good part; anger is a poor weapon to use in Ireland.

"'Twill be a mather of a hundred pound," said Magennis thickly. "There isn't a tooth or an eye in me head this minnit."

Hildebrand raved at them feebly. He pointed out the transient nature of the injuries; his endeavour to prove the existence of the gleaming row behind Magennis's fierce moustache was quieted by an upraised fist.

"Is it a colt he takes me for," roared the giant mightily, "to be rachin' up at me mouth? A hundred pound! A man's head gone from him, an' his eye rowlin' like an alley taw to the say."

Here, amid a sympathetic but threatening chorus, Standish's bray of laughter was fortunately smothered.

Hildebrand tried to mount his bicycle and failed.

"For Heaven's sake, you Blundell!" said Hildebrand. "I say I will go on. I will not be detained by these savages."

"Ye will not, but ye will march it to the polis," said some one, "and if ye say two wurrds yir own eye might be afther Andhrews' here. The craythur, blinded for life."

"Blundell," wailed Hildebrand. "I rang my bell. You are witness. They would not move. I am really sorry, but I decline blame. I——"

"Tomsy Fennessy," said Standish, coming into the circle "let you settle it."

As angry seas fall smoothly before oil, so the tempest died at sight of Standish. Tomsy Fennessy was one of his pet fishermen.

"Misther Blundell! 'Tis only some foolsome soort uv a tourist he has with him. Go aisy now, Magennis. There is not so much of ye losht at all."

"A hundred pound," stammered Mr. Magennis in whisky-scented accents.

He sat down upon the bank with majestic determination, and he added, pointing to a shell gleaming in the road, "that, be gripes! he had one of his teeth to walk up for a witness, anyways."

"They—they will sue me," almost whimpered Hildebrand, backing to Standish.

Standish said that it looked like it. "When a man's eye is away down the road," he said, "and his front teeth lying among the gravel."

"But, my God! they have not a leg to stand on," groaned

Hildebrand. "They were in the wrong. He has his eye. His teeth are in. The law——"

Standish, in melancholy tones, asked Hildebrand if he had ever been up before an Irish magistrate, who was probably a cousin of the plaintiff.

"I have," said Standish, when Hildebrand had shaken his head.

As mountain mist soaks slowly but surely through all it meets, so fear soaked in upon Hildebrand's heart. He saw the group of faces. He recognized the fact that he was an alien in a lawless land, and that justice would not be his.

"But they must swear," he whispered, "take oath."

Standish yawned as he remarked that that would be no trouble to them.

"And his eye," Hildebrand groaned, "his eye is *not* out, and his lost tooth is a sea-shell."

"He'll lay a patch over it and say it is. His sister is married to the doctor," said Standish dispassionately.

Fight, as starch before damp, left Hildebrand's mind. He crumpled up mentally, to stand upon the road and call for the justice of England.

"Well, Tomsy Fennessy," said Standish, grinning.

Tomsy Fennessy said judicially that Magennis's injuries were terrible entirely, and like to cause his death. "But the eye was half gone ov him before," confided Tomsy, "with a crack he got from a rock, and the scrape on his cheek 'll but cool him, so, as Mr. Blundell was a personal friend and patron, begones, Andy had drink in, and a few glasses more dhrunk friendly, might settle it all payce-able."

Andrew Magennis grunted that he would not make a liar of his friend.

"This might be better than a hundred pounds," said Standish to Hildebrand. "Take your chance now."

As a man in a nightmare, Hildebrand moved with the crowd, Andrew Magennis staggering by his side, urged to friendliness by the hope of whisky.

A slated house proclaimed that it was "Licensed for Sale," etc., and here they stopped. There was a grassy knoll outside.

Hildebrand absolutely refusing to go in, a stout, red-headed damsel brought out glasses and bottles.

"Sit down, let ye," commanded Magennis. "Sit down!" he blared to Hildebrand. "Frinds is frinds, or else they is innimies."

Hildebrand sat down hurriedly, for at the intervals of his friendliness Magennis muttered "A hundred pounds!" with a cunning blend of threat and regret.

"For frindship," said the giant, holding out a glass to Hildebrand.

"I can't—I am—I can't!" almost wailed the youth; but at a murmuring roar he hastily seized the glass and sipped feverishly, looking round wildly.

"They won't come down this road; they can't drive it," said Standish soothingly. "A weak one for me, boys. My head's unsteady."

The said weak one he spilt cunningly upon the ground, while Hildebrand, in the centre of the group, sipped nervously. Two sips made his face redder, his boots an agony. With a sudden movement he ripped at the buttons and loosed his feet of the black patent-leather vices. The relief made him almost amiable. He urged more whisky on Magennis as he wagged his crumpled toes to and fro. The sip of unwonted stimulant soothed him. He felt there was cunning in it to get off for nothing. Perhaps a few shillings for these drinks, and no more.

"Is it Three Star?" said Magennis doubtfully. "Is it Three Star, I say, Tomsy?"

"Drink it down," counselled some one. "'Tis the best, anyways."

An ill-humoured commencing "A hun—der," made Hildebrand snatch at the bottle. "If the man wishes it," he said; "is it Three Star? Hi, there, you girl! Is it Three——"

"'Twill make you see three stars an' you dhrinks it," boomed a big fisherman grumpily. "Make you see three sthars, I tell ye——"

Hildebrand held the bottle towards Magennis.

There are moments when one feels the presence of an audience.

It did not take the horrified cough behind him to make Hildebrand wheel and look. Standish had melted into the shadow of the fuchsia hedge, which shook as from a passing storm.

On the height overlooking the public-house stood the two elders of Greater Bethel, Miss Grimes, Mrs. Butler, Miss Hall Marten, Sandy, Mr. Allenbury, and Araminta.

They had come the lower road and walked across the hills while tea was getting ready.

"Make ye see three sthars," boomed Mr. Magennis drunkenly. "I tell ye, whippersnapper! Frindship—a hundred pound. A lost eye—no offince to frien' ov Mистер Blundell's—lose two for his like—com—sa—tion. Make on with that drink, Mary Anne!" he roared, suddenly growing coherent; "the young gentleman, me frind, an' meself has our glasses impty." Blood-stained, black-eyed, he wound a huge arm about Hildebrand's neck.

"How delightful," said Miss Grimes aloud.

With horror creeping down his back, Hildebrand staggered to his bootless feet. He looked at the watching group; he stood with his glass in his hand, open-mouthed, as though some hideous spasm of wit prompted him to toast them.

"Oh, Hildebrand!" said Allenbury.

"As I feared," said Mr. Grimes very clearly. "Influence has been too much for him. Ladies, let us *withdraw*."

"There is a pig or something caught in that hedge," said Araminta. "See how the leaves are shaking—just two or three bushes alone there."

A gull-like wail from Miss Brown drifted across the hill, calling that tea was ready.

When Hildebrand looked again there was no one there.

Mr. Magennis fell away from his friend's neck to clasp a new bottle of whisky.

Hildebrand slipped slowly towards the road.

"With what he has in him now," said Tomsy Fennessy, following, "I can settle it with him for tin shillin's, and if yer honour gives me another pound for the drinks——"

Hildebrand, with tears in his eyes, laid two pounds in the big brown hand.

"An' ye're boots," said a voice, "ye're dandy boots that nipped ye."

From somewhere, as the audience had turned away, rose a deep voice speaking in sonorous brogue.

"They yclept us drunkards, and indeed it takes from our achievements."

Mr. Jones paused, took out a note-book, and wrote in an entry.

"I had absolutely no idea that the Irish peasants were readers of Shakespeare," he said.

Sandy then looked back at the hedge with complete comprehension.

"What I cannot understand," said Araminta, "is why he took off his boots."

"Oh, delightful!" said Miss Grimes.

CHAPTER XII

So did this horse excel a common one, in shape and courage, colour, pace and bone.—*Venus and Adonis*.

“IF you are going to stay here without a horse,” said Standish, “you will have every one laughing at you—I tell you that—there’s the black mare, now.”

Hildebrand shivered visibly at the memory of the black mare.

“Man, it’s September—and you must hunt,” went on Standish. “Are you going to warm your pretty feet at the fire while ours are all in boots? Were you ever so proud of them,” observed Blundell gloomily, “as when Tomsy Fennessy’s boots made a pair of leather canoes for them—with pale-blue socks on you, too, you in your mourning!”

Hildebrand reddened angrily. Standish was referring to the hideous hour when he had sat in his socks with Magennis’s arm around his neck, and the sequel of the patent leather boots absolutely refusing to be forced back on his swollen feet, so that he stood shoeless until the kindly loan of Tomsy’s had placed leather between him and the world.

The memory of that tea still crisped chilly in Hildebrand’s memory. This Ireland was a hateful place—filled with suspicion and contumely. Yet he was chained to it by his stud. He was not an agreeable paying guest—his monthly cheque—he was careful not to pay it weekly—was signed with manifest reluctance. Occasionally he would cross small sums off.

“Less one day—away—only breakfast. Less price of socks, eaten by terrier, and so forth.

A spirit of dissension flapped his black wings over Castleknock. Araminta and Hildebrand lived to quarrel with each other, and unite against any one else. Little Mollie Knox, kept there almost against her will, could have told of a certain wastage of tears, shed privately after interviews with Miss Mellicombe.

It is not pleasant to be told that you are an interloper and a hanger-on, that you are unfitting yourself for the position you must occupy in life.

"Of course you may marry," said Araminta, "a poor doctor or a curate—ten shillings a week will nearly pay your housekeeping bills, but you should go where you can meet them, Mary Knox. The clergyman here," said Miss Mellicombe, "even if he was single, is outside thought."

Big Mr. Kelly, wrestling with the difficulties of three parishes, ten children, and an untidy wife, was despised by a young lady of High Church proclivities.

"I found him washing his own surplice last Saturday," said Araminta almost fiercely. "He said his wife was ill, and the girl had gone away, and he must be clean."

"I know, I ironed it for him," said Mollie. "I was in there that day."

It was not pleasant at Castleknock. Phillips confided the fact to Watson, and Watson replied, "Wot could you expect with them two in blinkers on the course."

Hildebrand had taken some time to recover from the injustice by the sea. His elders stayed on for three days, unveiling a manner which showed him to be under a cloud—it hung about him grey and dreary. His endeavour to pursue his suit was frustrated by many things—his constant explanations of how he had come to be on such terms with Magennis were always received in marked silence.

Hildebrand smarted under injustice during the three days at Inchleigh, and it did not make his temper sweeter. His interviews with Allenbury were of a stormy nature.

He signed papers under protest; he marked over every item of expenditure. The monthly bills of the racing stable nearly made him weep.

Mr. Allenbury, when asked how much percentage a lawyer got upon it all, would probably have developed apoplexy if he had been fat enough—as it was, he only whispered libel to himself between clenched teeth.

Hildebrand found that Miss Grimes possessed a gift for drifting away from such trysts as he made with her.

The difficulty of mending the Butlers' motor left them at the hotel for two days, and Susannah and Dermot, or Mollie and Dermot, were constantly taking trial trips to see if the car would run. It was then taken into a shed and pronounced nearly right, but still requiring adjustment.

On the night before the Grimeses left again for England Hildebrand, growing desperate, arranged a meeting on the moonlit shore—he was weary of frustration by godless young men. He went there, hurrying down across the sands to the rocks, standing out black against a silver sea, to be confronted by two shadows, which moved as he came up, and again by two others, but no giggle made music to the moon.

When Hildebrand had walked sulkily across several reaches of sands, he went home again to find later that Miss Grimes had apparently waited for him somewhere—she was not sure where—for quite ten minutes, and had then strolled up on the cliffs, alone and offended. She did not hint at a companion.

In the long days Mr. Jones, worthy elder, showed a great desire to impress Mollie Knox with the calm joys of life at Lesser Cheriton. He explained how the birds sang there, and the bees hummed in peaceful sanctity, while in winter fires flashed in cosy rooms, with no prophetic warning in their glow to the followers of the Greater Bethel religion.

Mr. Jones did not go out at night, but he instructed

Mollie how to play chess when the evenings were wet ; the men, borrowed from the hotel, lacked several ivory warriors. A black knight had to be replaced by a peppermint bullseye ; a white castle by a cotton reel—one queen was frail in delicate tracery, the other mended by blobs of wax.

When Mollie saw the black knight melting and absently ate him, confusion had reigned direly—so altogether the visit to the sea had not lacked incident, and Hildebrand brooded over it deeply.

He was torn between his desire to flee back to Greater Bethel, so that he might wipe the escutcheon of his fair fame clean, and the fear of leaving the horses alone at Droveen.

Allenbury, duly dignified, had looked at him coldly as they parted.

"You consider this ten shillings a week sufficient for a girl who was taught to look upon herself as an heiress ? " he said.

Hildebrand considered it ample. It was a gift—free of income tax.

"Some day," said Allenbury, "you and Miss Mellicombe may be sorry."

"When Red Fancy has won his race and I have my full income, I may increase the sum," said young Hannyside sulkily. "But I do not approve of Miss Knox."

"Oh, you wouldn't," said Allenbury quickly. "Good-bye."

All this lay behind. Now Hildebrand, standing on the gravel at Castleknock, was urged to buy a horse.

"They'll laugh at you," said Standish, "if you don't hunt. Sandy and Nora and the Butlers will all laugh."

Hildebrand looked at the saddle. He had heard a whisper of Miss Grimes being invited to Castle Butler during the winter. He thought of riding past her, with doughty courage, as she drove in a motor.

"If I could get a cheap animal," said Hildebrand. "Forty pounds is a large sum for a creature which eats."

He was unimpressed by the information that if it was not for her hocks and her wind it would be a hundred and forty. He said that he presumed an animal could not move without its hock or breathe without its wind, and therefore as both were there, the deterioration was a fixture.

He got upon the black mare's back and rode her without adventure to the avenue gate. He ambled upon the lawn, to decide that riding horseback, though slippery, was agreeable.

Phillips appeared from somewhere to applaud and advise.

"Stirrups longer—sit middle of saddle, sir," counselled Phillips; "hands low—enthraling occupation, sir, even for a novice."

Hildebrand explained irritably that he had constantly ridden.

"Margate boys not particular as to seat, sir," said Phillips gravely. "Difficult matter here, sir—yes, madam, at once." And Phillips melted away before Hildebrand could answer.

"Margate!" said Hildebrand, kicking the black mare wrathfully. Her astonished side placed him on her neck. Having scrambled back, he rode back to Standish to explain how he had sat a vicious plunge.

"He'll never buy a horse," said Standish to Phillips.

Phillips replied that he feared not. "That is until he does it cleverly, sir," said Phillips blandly. "When there is a hundred pounds worth to be got for ten."

"Have you a message, Bill Costello?" said Standish curtly.

A small and horsey-looking man, with a red face, breeches and gaiters, and a tail coat reaching nearly to his ankles, was standing behind them. He was a local horse-dealer with an unsavoury reputation, due to his talent for taming hitherto incurable rogues.

A month with William Costello made them glad to go anywhere out of his yard. He was an equine sausage mill,

taking the raw meat and turning it out ground, smooth, flavoured, and fit for human consumption ; but, like the succulent sausage, his goods did not keep.

"It was the loan of a bit I took from Mr. Acland that I came to return," said Costello. "A little mare I had that wanted a twisted snaffle, and I not to have one." Mr. Costello looked at Hildebrand ambling on the lawn.

"Has he her bought for ye, Misther Blundell?" he asked. "She should be flightsome for a lerner."

"He heard us," said Standish thoughtfully, as Costello went away.

"Sandy," he called to Acland, "did you ever see a man sit more unhappily on a saddle?"

Sandy, looking slightly worried, contemplated Hildebrand gloomily. "All the unhappiness in the world," he said, "won't make him go away. As long as Red Fancy is in the yard, Hildebrand will be in the house. What is to happen if the horse loses?" groaned Sandy.

"Oh, murder, foul and uncharitable," quoted Standish. "Bear up, they'll never stand another year, Sandy, even if they have to marry each other."

Mr. William Costello, blandly villainous, had strolled to Hildebrand's side. He paused to ask, very politely, where Mr. Hannyside had hunted before.

"'Twill be a change for ye here," said Costello, "though England's a great land for a gallop—that mare should match ye well, but for her hocks"—he looked significantly at the marks of the irons. "I wouldn't say they'd stand long with her," added the horse dealer. "I would not—but they might. It's bad to be losin' on a horse. If ye'd throw an eye over my lot now before—there is one horse there, an' he might be worth three hundred if a gentleman had him. I'd sell him chape, too—me profit is all I looks for," said Bill with childlike candour.

Hildebrand nodded, and rode the black mare once more to the steps. He got off, saying he would think of it, and he went in.

Araminta was reading letters in the drawing-room. She was ill-humoured and depressed.

Hildebrand sat down, asked how much a year Araminta's cigarettes cost, and how she could reconcile the expenditure to her conscience, and then broached the subject of hunting.

"One appears here to be the object of ridicule if one does not hunt," he said.

Araminta lighted another cigarette, and suggested acidly that some people might remain so even if they followed the chase.

"I," added Araminta, "am already advertising in *The Lady* for a habit. Mrs. Acland is lending me an old saddle, and I mean to hunt."

Hildebrand wished plaintively that hunting could be arranged without horses.

"They eat," said Hildebrand, "and they use clothes and iron shoes, which wear shockingly. But for us"—his face lightened—"ours can be kept in the racing-stable, and there must be leavings they can eat up."

A common meanness sometimes drew the cousins together. Araminta considered the merits of the black mare and decided they had better steer clear of Standish Blundell and try a farmer. "A countryman," she averred, "would not know the true value of hunters. If they were to ride with grace by the opening meet they had better begin at once."

A further conversation resulted in Araminta and Hildebrand arranging to take a walk together; they met Mollie, looking a little pale and wistful, at the door. She had got on her blue dress and was studying the avenue with expectancy.

"Why," said Miss Mellicombe, "do you not practise the art of teaching with excellent Miss Brown? You idle disgracefully, Mollie Knox."

"Disgracefully," said Hildebrand.

Mollie retorted somewhat testily that they must remem-

ber that she had hoped to be able to idle pleasantly. "I—did not think I should be a pauper," said Mollie, a little tremor in her voice.

Araminta laughed unpleasantly. She said that for her part she had always guessed that her Uncle Hannyside never meant to really leave Mollie anything.

"He made you an allowance to save himself from worry," snapped Araminta severely. "You hunted him so hard, Mollie."

Mollie went slowly down the steps, tears smarting behind her lids, her cheeks scarlet.

"A sulky temper," said Hildebrand blandly, "will completely unfit you for any position as teacher."

"I'm not going to take one—I'm going to take a cottage and feed pigs," called back Mollie naughtily, "at Mrs. Butler's gate."

"Feed pigs!" said Araminta, coming out with her complexion protected by two blue veils. "How awful! If we were still here. How appalling—she might do it too." She turned to Mikkelo, who was raking gravel. "Mikkelo, can one live on pigs?"

"Ye can so," said Mikkelo enthusiastically, believing that Miss Mellicombe referred to bacon.

"Then it's worse than ever," groaned Araminta.

They walked across the lawn, getting out over a fence which tried Araminta sorely, into a narrow by-lane. Here Bessy the orange woman directed them "to folly the borgen on to Costello's, and miss it they could not."

A slated house standing back behind a tangle of unkempt flowers marked the end of their quest. A red tin roof covered a group of stabling at the back; a boggy track between two high banks could have told tales of the horses which had been cowed in its holding depths, with no hope of getting away from the cruel whips.

Mr. William Costello was ringing a lumpy five-year-old in a field almost bare of grass. He had bought the horse

as a determined rogue for ten pounds and was commencing his education.

"Now this is simplicity," said Araminta softly. "This poor unintelligent man will not know what horses are really worth. You were right to bring me here, Hildebrand."

William Costello greeted them with a honeyed smile. He could match them for the winther, surely.

"Something temperate, ye'll want," said Bill—"a nice steady animal, that will carry ye. I have the very thing," he said. "I have two letters here about him, but as ye come to me I won't disappoint."

He flung open the door of an evil-smelling stable, calling to a one-eyed henchman to strip this 'oss.

"This 'oss" shone forth blooming from an over-heated loose box—a tall narrow bay, trimmed and shaved to a semblance of quality. He had been a determined pig before Costello bought him, with a nasty trick of folding up and lying down when he was asked to jump, and a confirmed runaway on the flat, but now the memory of fire or stick had induced him to keep on his feet. With a long swish tail and a fine rein he was not untaking.

That he had sidebones, was a confirmed ankle wiper, and a whistler were mere items of no importance.

"There's for ye," said Costello, "nearly in the book. No fince can sthop him. A great doer an' gentle as two lambs."

"For the love ov God, Joe," he whispered, "show him the sthick if the lady goes to pet him."

"Thirty pound," said Costello, "as it is our first dale. And I tell ye I don't know his true vally."

Hildebrand had the bay out. He looked at the blooming coat, at the giraffe-like height.

"There is much more," he said, "included here for thirty pounds, than Mr. Blundell offered me for forty."

"That little bit ov a fired mare," said Costello contemptuously. "I can see you are a judge, sir. As ye say, there's height an' size."

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HILDEBRAND
"How much oats now," said Hildebrand, "would this animal exist on per diem; and would he be particular?"

Mr. Costello, completely nonplussed, gazed at Hildebrand before he replied. With truth he might have returned "none"—for bran and turnips supported the bay at Annis Farm. He began to say twenty, and then stopped to look at Joe, who combined a rapid wink and frown, also hissing "near!" as he turned the horse round.

So Costello fell to ten, and added that such a healthy horse would live on anything you'd give him. "He's none of yer dainty ones," said Bill diplomatically. "A good bite of hay would keep him."

"There is none dainty here," murmured Joe drily, in a non-committal voice.

Hildebrand thought it all out, grudging the expenditure sorely.

"A saddle and bridle," he remarked doubtfully.

"Hasn't Mr. Acland a sight of saddles above," interposed Costello, "and haven't ye bridles to fit a town from ye're own racers?"

Hildebrand fell back to consider it.

"An' what," said Joe in a husky whisper to his master, "is to happen if there is any chat of eggsamination?"

"If 'tis Hefferty, he owes me twenty pound for his harness mare," murmured Costello. "But if what?—if 'twas Considine? if there is word of Considine, then the stable door is locked, an' this horse is dead an' gone, finished up," Costello said firmly.

Then, perceiving that Hildebrand and Araminta were regarding him with suspicion, he turned with a smile fair as a summer's dawn, and left Joe.

"Me man there," said Costello, "is just afther tellin' me how a friend of Lord Cahir's that is sthaying in' at the great house, spotted this fellow on the road but yestherday, and promised himself a wheel over to see him. Joe is wantin' me to wait, but if ye wants the horse, me word is given," said Costello dramatically.

"You see," whispered Araminta, "it is evidently a valuable animal, and if others come the man will know."

Hildebrand had a saddle put on; he bumped, amid the silent prayers of dealer and man, twice round the field, and he came back elated. He said, as he slid off on the wrong side, that he thought he had better take the animal.

"Won't he match a pink coat fine?" said Costello enthusiastically. "Won't he show ye off at the hunt, sir?"

"God save us, but 'tis likely he will," murmured Joe as he led the bay in. "'Tis lucky ye'll both be," rasped Joe, in the shelter of the evil-smelling stable, "if yerself an' his corpse is out together at the ind, and ye with his boots sthrung on ye upside down in attendance behind it."

"Sneak in an' ginger the grey mare," hissed a whisper from the door.

With all the suspicion of a small nature, Hildebrand was determined not to ask advice of Sandy, who might step in and buy the horse for himself. With sad deliberation he produced a neatly folded cheque book and followed Costello into a parlour, where the blended odours of whisky and tobacco hung in undisturbed unity over some dusty furniture.

"Them girrls," said Costello, smacking a chair clean, "is no use to any man."

The offer of a dhrop was firmly declined. Tea, made magically fast, appeared for Araminta, accompanied on its tray by several boiled eggs.

A dry bargain, Costello explained, was no bargain. "There is a milk dhrink here now, that the old lady at the hall gave me, I can't lay the right name to it."

He lifted a dirty bottle from a cupboard full of decanters and glasses, and he would take no denial. Hildebrand tasting, found the milky fluid curiously comforting.

"There is no alcohol?" he said suspiciously.

"Sorra a taste," affirmed Costello, adding with a puzzled

air that he wished he could lay his tongue to the name. "There none ov that anyways," he added, pouring out a second brimming glass.

A mellowness of good humour fell upon Hildebrand ; he found himself absolutely thanking Mr. Costello for the horse which he had sold him. Hazily he made promise that of course he would not listen to any other opinions or blame the horse-dealer for anything.

He sat and smiled, and he got up and smiled, but he thought when he went out that the air made him a little giddy.

Costello led the way across the yard to other stables. He recognized the futility of showing the impossibilities first to these two, so as to make the possibility a delightful relief, and he went straight to the point.

A small and indifferently tried grey mare was revealed by the falling rug. Fat and blooming, with a long swish tail, a hogged mane, and a pair of pig eyes blinking in her head. She had round joints, a lumpy shoulder, and the swish tail, which she carried splendidly, was her sole claim to breeding.

"If the lady," said Costello, "wants perfection there it is." He flicked at the grey with his whip and she moved unwillingly to show herself off.

"There's quality," said Costello pointing to the tail. "If she were done—I have her but a few days—ye'd see what she'd be. But she can lep to pieces."

"Good gracious!" said Araminta nervously.

"Lep grand entirely," said Costello. "Grand. Clap a saddle on this one, Joe."

"Let ye do the chat for a minit whiles I run in for the sharp sphurs," murmured Joe.

"There's for ye," said Costello. "Nate and swate. If she was in England there's no knowin' the price that'd be on her. Not the same that I'm puttin'," said Costello truthfully. "Sweetheart, we calls her, she being by Cherry-stones, an' her dam be Reveller."

The grey mare walked regretfully into the yard, where she blinked sleepily. The scrape of Joe's spurs roused her to a bitterly unwilling activity, in which she trotted and cantered rather nicely round the field. And being put at a low wall, jumped it with the strongest reluctance.

Hildebrand had seated himself on an upturned bucket, his back against the wall. He felt suddenly very tired and peaceful. The grey mare was a mere blur as she sped round the field, but when Araminta roused him by persistent questioning, he said "Perfection—delightful," and closed his eyes again happily. Araminta rather fancied a grey. She inquired the price nervously, adding that she could not afford much.

Costello, having bought the mare for fifteen pounds, stroked his chin. Her piggish laziness made her almost impossible to sell. She droned through a fair, impervious even to sharp spur and ginger after a time. She dug her toes in as she walked and she stumbled when she trotted.

"Thirty-five pounds. A price I never thought to ask," said Costello. "But when there's two goin' 'tis different."

Araminta eyed the dozing Hildebrand and smiled. She could see that his purchase had saved her money.

"She seems amiable," said Araminta, stroking the grey muzzle.

"She is that same, miss," said Joe grimly.

"And I *do* like her tail," said Araminta. "It is so prettily put on."

Joe said nothing this time, he merely looked respectful. The flotsam and jetsam of groom worlds drift into small horse-dealer's yards, and stay there stranded on a muddy shore, but curiously faithful to their employers.

Joe had ridden sleek hunters to meets once, but the curse of whisky had undone him. Now his nights were his own to drink on, if he were ready in the mornings to wrestle with pullers and sulkers and a variety of evil-doers.

"I will take her," said Araminta spasmodically. "I will buy a grey habit to match her, Hildebrand!"

Hildebrand opened his eyes unwillingly. "That old milk," he said, "must have disagreed with me, I do not feel well."

Costello, smiling sweetly, said he had had six bottles of it, and never saw it do harm to a Christian. "Ould Lady May sent it to me two years ago," he said, "for pullin' her out of a ditch. I'll carry over the horses in the morning," he said. "Sure, time enough, miss, pay me when I sees ye."

Araminta whispered to Hildebrand that she felt sure they ought to give something to the man, but Hildebrand looking longingly at the bucket he had sat on, responded irritably. Finally persuaded by his cousin, he fumbled for sixpence, which, wedded to one of Araminta's, was, he considered, quite enough.

"Grateful people these Irish," he said, as he left. "I do wish, Araminta, you would keep the trees quiet."

Araminta feared that he was really ill, for half-way home Hildebrand sat down again to doze upon a damp bank, and wake with a clutch at his head.

The long avenue at Castleknock seemed interminable as he toiled up it. Filled with ill humour, he went into the drawing-room at Droveen and drank strong tea with feverish thirst, while the astonishing news was broken. Araminta burst into confidences as to her horse. She flung the information at them triumphantly.

"Hildebrand's horse is very nice — reddish," said Araminta, "and tall, but mine is lovely."

Mollie Knox sighed a little drearily. She could not think of hunting, and she rode well.

"Grey," said Araminta, "a beautiful sleek grey, and oh, her tail."

Standish took some buttered toast and remarked that Costello was strong on tails.

"She holds it so beautifully," said Araminta.

Standish looked at her gloomily. "That's what Jorrocks

said to Benjamin; when the morning was cold he said, 'Think o' ginger, Benjamin.'

Miss Mellicombe replied icily that she could not see the association between ginger and tails.

Sandy hummed a tune quite softly. He seemed rather pleased about something, his tune was that of "Eliza, you're a daisy," but the words he put to it seemed to be "Costello, you're a dealer."

"These farmer-men, of course, do not know the value of their horses, so we secured bargains!" said Araminta loftily.

Hildebrand, so far, had not spoken.

"Do you know the grey, Standish?" Sandy said.

"She should be Malachi Dunnes's," said Standish. "He used to drive her in his round trap, but a wire whip wouldn't do."

"And an—er—tall bay?" Sandy questioned.

Standish said he did not know the bay. He looked at Hildebrand, who was holding his head dolefully.

"It was something he took at Costello's," said Araminta, "white stuff—milk drink, Mr. Costello called it, but it didn't agree with Hildebrand. Something a Lady May sent there."

Standish's bray of laughter cut across the room.

"It might take a stronger head to agree with old May Caher's milk punch," he said. "Go and sleep it off, my boy. It's your only chance."

Hildebrand rose dizzily, he muttered that he had drunk nothing but some sweetish milk with a curious flavour, and he disappeared for the evening.

The arrival of the horses next morning was quite an event. Standish rode over to be there when they came. Phillips was on the doorstep.

Hildebrand, still suffering from headache, watched the tall bay sidling up the avenue, by his side the unwilling grey, with the tail still at a correct angle. Mr. Costello looked painfully disconcerted at his large audience. It

was further augmented by Dennis Butler, riding a long-tailed, half-broken brown colt.

"I think," said Hildebrand, "that I have secured a good animal to hunt on, his hind legs are not fired."

"He might lep," said Dennis, eyeing the bay. "You didn't get him here, Costello."

"No, sir; but in Kerry," said Costello.

"What county is farthest from Kerry?" said Standish thoughtfully. Having looked critically at the bay, he was unkind enough to ask if sidebones were thrown in for nothing, and how much for a spavin? "Makes a noise I suppose which does not stop him," said Standish. Then he hit the grey mare hard.

"She's as used to punching as a boxer's bag," said Standish, grinning. "And you nearly killed Mr. Hannyside with that stuff you gave him, Bill."

"When he was a teetotaller an' would not take tea, I found it," said Costello. "I have the name looked out on an old bottle, 'tis milk punch."

Hildebrand grew very red and groaned faintly.

"The only thing he was agin was alcool," said Costello, "an' I knew 'twas innocint of that."

"We will stable these horses," said Hildebrand, after a pause. "Take them up. Oh, thank you, Phillips. Yes, go with the man."

Five minutes later Phillips appeared to say that Mr. Watson absolutely declined to have strange 'osses in his yards—that one had a cawf, and that the horses were again outside.

Hildebrand remarking that he would teach Watson who was master, reached for his hat.

"Do I understand that he—he—said he would not take them in?" fumed young Hannyside.

"Said as how he'd be—that is that he would not, sir," said Phillips politely. "Racehorses very precious, sir."

A procession headed by the tall bay, and brought up by Araminta with her arm flung round the neck of the grey

mare, approached the upper yard. The door was always locked.

Hildebrand rang the bell clamorously.

The clang was followed by a feminine squeal.

"Mrs. Mac," said Sandy, surprised.

"The ould woman is away to the great house," observed Mikkelo, placing an inquiring eye to the keyhole; "but I sees Delia."

At this point the door was opened by Watson. Mrs. Acland's maid, looking extremely demure, was tripping down from a distant stable with a book in her hands. One, she explained, dropped there three days before by her mistress.

Hildebrand, adopting the air of the Compleat Master, wished to know if his horse was not to be kept in his own yard.

Mr. Watson, blandly determined, said it certainly was not. Red Fancy was too precious to be endangered.

"'Osses from a dealer's yard," said Watson contemptuously. "'Osses—as might." He eyed the tall bay suspiciously. "No, sir."

"If you get an extra man," said Sandy, "I'll take them in, Hildebrand—at four pounds a month," he added gently. When oats and hay and stabling might have been had for nothing. Hildebrand gritted his teeth. He ordered Mr. Watson to obey him, and Mr. Watson smiled and looked at Sandy. He turned a bland but stony profile to young Mr. Hannyside's varied explosions of wrath. He finally appealed to Cæsar, who stood grinning softly, with the air of the appellant who has no fear of his reply. The safety of chasers was at stake; were they to be jeopardised?

"With 'osses," said Watson, "wot rubs shoulders with ring-worms an' vermin an' cawfs in forges. Wot is put in as I 'ave seen, in muck-'ouses, while the owners drinks or goes to funerals. Muck-'ouses! No," said Watson crisply. "No, not here in Ireland!"

"Four pounds a month," said Sandy. "The two upper

boxes are vacant, and we'll find the boy. Watson is right, Hildebrand."

"We want a boy to do boots and knives," murmured Nora absently.

With the bitterness of defeat rankling in his heart, Hildebrand walked away. A cousin of Mikkelo, one Hannan, a sallow youth with red-rimmed eyelids, dropped as manna, not from heaven, but from the farmyard, where he had been waiting to ask for a job. There wasn't a thing but he'd lay his hand to, he promised eagerly. "An' he had cared hunthers all last winther." Yellow straw fell crisply upon stony floors. Fragrant hay was tossed down into corners. The horses, vaguely suspicious at the cleanly absence of smells, were installed.

"There are still their clothes," said Araminta tragically, "the things which are over them."

But at this point Hildebrand asserted himself with a "Here, you boy Hannan. Tell Mr. Watson to send me at once clothing for two horses. At once!"

"And stockings," said Araminta, "the grey footless kind they wear; don't forget those."

Watson returned himself, helping the boy to carry some ragged race clothing. Mr. Costello had gone to the house to receive a cheque from Araminta. Having thanked her, he made hurried way across the fields, took out his dog-cart, and went to cash it in the town.

Watson stood looking at the bay horse, looking with a look which grew curiously thoughtful.

The peculiar outstretched neck and swallow were not to be mistaken.

"God above save us, but he dhraws the wind," said Mikkelo in awed tones.

"Nice kind of thing to bring into my yards," answered Watson. "Well, he bought him for better or worse I expects. A wind-sucker." He looked over the half-door. "Likewise a few embellishments," said Watson, grinning. "Good 'oss, eh, Mikkelo?"

"Wait till ye sees him out, sir"—Mikkelo's cousin adjusted the rugs—"with his head carried up, lookin' back over his tail, as he with his mouth open gettin' his fill of wind for himself. I seen him an' he new, below at Costello's. I ran over for the lond of a pony harness, our own bein' mid bits of, an' I come in quiet like an unbeknownst. But he was glad enough to stop before them two were done with him. I'd be thankful for a big bit, sir, to clap in his jaws in the mornin'. An' he'll lie down and he tirenened," finished Hannan cheerily.

A certain uneasiness creeping over Hildebrand was not checked by the smiling glances he saw on other people's faces.

Standish, having interviewed Watson, counselled the immediate isolation of the wind-sucker to what was known as the "sthable up above," where he would not impart his bad ways to his fellows.

"It was a queer thing to buy," he said emphatically to Hildebrand. "But, of course, if you wanted a rank screw."

Araminta, looking out of the window, gave a squeal of dismay. "My beautiful grey's tail is tucked right in," she said. "Oh look, Mr. Blundell; she must be ill."

Sandy's wink to his wife was quite artistic.

"You might wait for a long time," said Standish, "before you see that tail out again. 'Me sisther is cruel fond of a ginger loaf, sir,' said Costello one day to me, and I meeting him at Delaney's buying a pound of the stuff. 'It's grand stuff,' said I, 'with the ginger left out, because it's wanted elsewhere'; and he gave me a look as bitter as weasels. There isn't a horse of Costello's but carries its tail like a banner, until some other fellow gets them."

When next day Hildebrand, after a most uneasy ride upon the bay horse, went down to Costello to remonstrate, he was received with the hurt of innocence. Did not any gentleman know that if sound the horse was worth two hundred sovereigns? "Surely, sir, you did not expect to

buy a sound blood hunter for thirty," said Costello in offended tones. "A strap will cure the wind-sucking; the horse does not go lame. Surely you did not expect it," repeated Costello.

Hildebrand, abandoning the argument, knew that unfortunately he had expected it.

CHAPTER XIII

And leads the will to desperate undertakings.

—*Hamlet.*

“WHEN he is done with her may be he’ll stop,” observed Mikkelo to his cousin.

“It’s the length he takes to be done that’ll tiren ye,” returned Hannan. “I missed to ring him this mornin’, and there is Misther Hannyside now with one trouser leg near to his waist and be like to fall off.”

The tall bay, named by his master Perfection, was tearing round the big field at a sprawling gallop. His lean head was straight up, his jaws were open; he would stop when he was blown, but not before.

“Bran,” said Mikkelo sapiently, “bran is the match of his likes. It’s sthronger than fancy bits, I tell ye, to hould a horse. Lave the oats bin shut down, Patsy, or he’ll do a mischief to the poor foreigner above on his back.”

“There’s one that won’t run, at any rate,” said Patsy blithely. Araminta, robed in an exceedingly ill-fitting habit, came ambling past upon the grey Twilight. The mare would have preferred walking, but being urged to gallop, she ambled. With her untrue action and lack of fire, it would have been difficult to imagine a more unpleasant mount.

“So docile,” said Araminta, sitting firmly to one side: “so gentle. I suppose,” she pulled up by Mikkelo, “she is afraid to interfere with the other horse if she gallops, Mikkelo, because she won’t.”

“Faix, maybe,” said Mikkelo, politely agreeing with a lady.

At this moment Phillips, riding, joined the group, and

Hildebrand came near for the third time. His mouth was open, his complexion crimson ; he wailed for advice as he galloped up.

Phillips, turning, opened the gate leading to the stables, and the bay, seeing it, swerved and was captured.

"He seemed to wish to go on—and—on," gasped Hildebrand.

"A racing snaffle, sir," said Phillips, "is not an excellent bit to a puller, sir. One moment, sir. If I may give him a little more. You might get off, sir."

As Hildebrand tumbled to the ground, Phillips lengthened the stirrups and got on to the bay. A couple of rounds of the field announced him that the tall horse had a mouth like iron, and pulled more from vice than high spirits. Phillips raced the horse at a low wall, which he sailed over, and at a bank, taken with more zeal than skill.

"I greatly fear, sir," said Phillips blandly, "that this horse requires training, sir, much training. Excitable horse, sir."

Stroking his chin thoughtfully, Phillips proposed that Hildebrand should learn to ride on a stout and well-behaved cob belonging to him, while he would try to subdue the bay.

"This fellow," murmured Phillips to Mikkelo, "might do a hunt if it was fast enough for him."

"When he's done he'll lie down," observed Hannan placidly.

The cob being produced, Hildebrand found it greatly to his liking, and Phillips, going into the next field, knocked over old Betty's goat and jumped into her potatoes before he stopped Perfection.

Miss Knox, who was looking for mushrooms with Dennis Butler—they searched a good deal by the hedges—said she feared that Hildebrand would never make a horseman.

Dennis, watching the flying exit of Phillips, remarked

that he thought the best thing the owner of Perfection could make was his will.

"I don't like his eye," said Dennis. "He looks mad, somehow." They sat down to consider the question. Blackberry leaves were turning to gold and russet and scarlet; the wondrous paint-brush of autumn was being laid on the world. All round the trees were clutching out at last riot of beauty before their winter sleep, were taking colour. It was as if some fairy, with a brush of fire had passed by, burning some brown, scorching others, searing leaves to scarlet and gold and red and brilliant browns. Now and again a leaf, less brilliantly painted than her fellows, would slip patiently, almost sadly to the earth, knowing her life was done; whipped by the wind, beaten down by rain; torn asunder by frost, she had left her brothers and sisters for ever. There is sadness in autumn, in the yearly death of the world, the freezing of sap, the resting of the great scarred earth, doubly sad because we who can lay the axe to the tree, and tear the earth to our desire, have but one spring, one summer, one failing, and one death. While the world merely sleeps to wake again, we must, when our autumn is ended, sleep for ever.

Mollie said nervously that she did not care for the autumn. The girl had lost her careless merriment. Uncertainty lay before her, she could not stay on at Castleknock for ever.

"But my goodness," said Dennis, "why, autumn is the gate to the hunting season. I have three youngsters, which I can't possibly afford to keep if they don't keep me; but I'll wait to see until after Christmas. The forage contractor is a very decent fellow," added Dennis.

Mollie sighed. Then she asked severely why Dennis did not buy forage at first cost from the farmers.

"But I should have to pay the farmers," said Dennis emphatically. I promise twopence extra a stone to O'Keefe."

Here Mollie tried to keep severe, and laughed instead.

She thought the world might be a nice place if she were an heiress, and she got up to go back to Castleknock.

On their way there they met Dermot, who had taken his car to the yard and came to meet them. He observed briefly that the mater was there; that she wouldn't let him come alone. "I think she has hopes of making Hildebrand see he is breaking all his rules of holiness, and of marrying me to Araminta," confided Dermot gloomily.

"She would reduce your tailor's bill," said Mollie thoughtfully.

"Ha, have you seen Hildebrand's hunting clothes? He is getting the little man in the village, Keefe, to copy Mr. Acland's," gulped Dermot.

The unseemly and over-loud laughter of three people brought Mrs. Butler to the window. She had assumed the fur garments of cold weather, and was regal in sealskins and silver fox.

"Dermot," she called loudly.

Dermot hesitated and went in.

"Dennis," said Mrs. Butler.

Dennis merely nodded.

"If I," he said, "had half Dermot's income. If I had anything, but the place is not entailed, and my stepmamma has bought it. My priority of years may endow me with a thousand pounds."

Mollie breathed Canada faintly.

Dennis knocked down an unoffending dahlia and replied that most girls were simply slaves out there. Ruined hands, beans, and frying pans," said Dennis, "that's all they're there for, and besides, there is not a pack of hounds in the country. What's the use of coming back to hunt when one's sixty, and can't do it?"

Mollie, who for some reason had found the beans and bacon a matter for a heightened colour, said she supposed it wasn't.

"And I don't know who the girl is," said Miss Knox wrathfully, "but if she thinks so much of her hands she is not worth bothering about."

"But I'm the one who thinks of her hands," said Dennis quietly.

"Directly I get in," said Mollie, appearing not to hear, though her cheeks were white now, "Araminta will suggest my going to help Miss Brown; the fact of my dependent position is not allowed to drop out of sight."

"You were taking a walk with Dennis?" asked his step-mother coldly.

"We were looking for mushrooms," said Dennis.

"Mushrooms," sniffed Araminta, "are not fit to eat in September."

"Well, we only found dead leaves," said Mollie, laying one gorgeous specimen of gold russet and scarlet on the tea table. "So it doesn't matter."

Araminta looked up at her cousin. "It is French day in the schoolroom," she said—"an opportunity for you, Mollie, which you should not miss."

"Miss Knox's French being a little weak," said Mrs. Butler. "My little nieces did not progress when such simple words as 'gateaux' were not known."

"And cats," said Mollie absently. "It's a great drawback," she added, "to have learnt all one's French in Paris, it's so unintelligible."

Mrs. Butler, with a glance of heavy surprise said no French at all was spoken in Paris. "All the waiters prefer English," she said, "and it is quite pedantic and uppish to ask in French at the shops. Paris was quite ridiculous."

Mollie said it had been delightful. "Cousin Reggie was there so often," she added wistfully, "at his villa; and we drove and saw places and operas and people."

"And now," said Araminta, "the children will be back to tea if you don't go to help Miss Brown."

Sandy handed Mollie some tea with a firm air. Sandy's winks were now delivered with extreme skill.

"Try some honey sandwiches, Miss Mellicombe," said Dennis, briefly bringing over a plate.

Mrs. Butler was a person who absorbed a majestically

large tea. She took hot cakes and sandwiches and chocolate cake and more sandwiches. But there was no softening of her majestic nature over butter and honey and almond icing. She grew more splendid as her cheeks deepened in colour from her third cup of tea.

"Miss Hall Marten has just written to me," she said; "Evelina is a charming girl."

"If you could have kept her awake," said Sandy absently. Mrs. Butler replied sternly that Miss Hall Marten had complained of the lack of air in Ireland. "Electric fans, you know, and so forth. Society girls were used to amusement of course. She has asked Dennis to stay with them," boomed Dennis's stepmother with meaning. "She liked Dennis."

Dennis said hurriedly that fortunately he had no frocks for visiting in.

"That," said his stepmother, brushing aside Araminta's hasty interruption as to men not wearing frocks, "can be arranged. Miss Hall Marten has two thousand a year of her own, my dear," she said to Nora.

"And no doubt spends it, when she is awake," said Nora pleasantly. "Her hands are certainly pretty."

Miss Hall Marten's hands were one of her attractions; they were white and well made.

Mollie put down her tea; an untasted cake stood in the saucer.

"Her parents," went on Mrs. Butler, "give Evelina what she wishes for; she is an only daughter." Here Mrs. Butler looked at her immaculately clothed son and sighed. "I suppose it was contrast," she said gloomily.

"Contrast of what?" Nora asked.

"Of clothes," said Mrs. Butler. "Dennis, I can take you back if you walked over. Good gracious, Mr. Hannyside, are you ill?"

Hildebrand, pinky hot from a bath, came stiffly into the room.

"Not ill, but sore," said Hildebrand gruffly. "A gallop

of some eight miles, when one is not used to it." He touched the insides of his knees peevishly.

There was no real love of riding in Hildebrand's heart. He could never feel the joy of the horse beneath him, the strong shoulders ripping the wind in a gallop, the cool rush of air on his face. As Hildebrand ambled he pondered gloomily on his weekly bills. When Perfection galloped he wondered why mad fools got on to beasts which would not stop ; why they got their knees rubbed and their hands sore for nothing.

With dread in his heart Hildebrand looked at the jumps round the country. He thought of the horror of facing the big green banks, the loose stone walls ; it was bad enough to sit on a horse when he was on flat ground, but when he was in the air springing for safe foothold, clearing nasty wet drains, bucking high over stones. But it was the right thing to do, and Hildebrand practised stolidly.

Araminta, on the other hand, enjoyed it vaguely. She considered she became her new habit excessively, and said that foxes' brushes would be useful in London for dusting with.

Sandy asked gravely what she would do with the heads, to which Araminta replied that all gamy people put them on walls, and was offended by a ribald mutter from Standish as to the misuse of the word gamy.

Hildebrand drank hot tea in large quantities. He tried now and again to talk of Greater Bethel when he found an opening between horses and foxes, but no one noticed him. Even Mrs. Butler talked of hunting ; the love of it was in a cool September air.

"Oh, I love the tumbling leaves," said Nora eagerly. "And I want to be dead when I can't hunt."

"She was favouring the off fore," boomed Standish, "plain to see, she's lame," I said. "That is the new smith that pinched her yesterday," said Billy ; "but I ran my hand down her tendon and I left her there. Not much

rest she had before I came to look at her, I'll bet, that it might be down for me."

"And I asked him about the cough, and he said, 'Oh, I wouldn't notice that,'" from Dennis. "Nice boasting, as if he didn't sit in the stables half the day and more. A fellow that knows every sneeze they give."

"Two litters," from Mrs. Butler. "Two, I assure you, and yet they'll say we have no foxes except in the gorse covert. Two chickens and a half taken last night. Oh, Standish, how stupid you are. Of course they did not take the half. It was two couples and a half."

"I tried those grey boots. Nothing like them for an ankle wiper. . . ."

"Watson is going to hunt," burst out Nora. "He has bought Standish's black mare."

As hawk upon its prey Hildebrand pounced. His fat cheeks flushed, his eyes became positively joyous.

"He shall not," said Hildebrand stoutly, "keep his everyday hunter free in the racing stables. He shall not feed it upon our oat scraps. If I was refused, I will see about this," said Hildebrand importantly.

His rush to see to it without delay unfortunately carried him past Mrs. Butler's chair, where he tripped heavily on one of that lady's feet. Hildebrand was not light, and Mrs. Butler remained faithful to the sized shoe she had worn as a girl. Behind a scarlet flush of pain she endeavoured not to say what she wished to.

"In your place," said the injured lady, as Hildebrand got to the door, "I should lock all stimulants up, Nora."

Her voice was loud and piercing, it struck Hildebrand unfairly in the back, and, as he was not intended to hear it, he could not rush back and declaim his innocence.

Sandy went to the window.

"Hildebrand," he said.

Hildebrand raised a face empurpled by suppressed righteousness and importance.

"Hildebrand," said Sandy, "Watson is to keep the

mare in my stables. He is feeding her himself, that's all. You need not have hurried."

Hildebrand returned to the drawing-room to honour Mrs. Butler with a glare, which she unfortunately interpreted as being inspired by strong drink.

"Danny Keefe, sir," announced Phillips, "has brought the hunting outfit for trying on, sir. Danny Keefe says he is short of red cloth, sir."

When Hildebrand had again left the room, Standish smiled softly.

"My deeds upon my head," he quoted with gloomy satisfaction. Further, Standish wished to know in a whisper, if Hildebrand had bought the stuff secondhand.

Dermot Butler, in a voice which failed from extreme shock, asked feebly if they were all joking or if Hildebrand was really getting Daniel Keefe to make a hunting-coat. "Not making, oh, my heavens," murmured Dermot.

"Also the cords, sir," said Phillips as he loaded the tray. "Copy of Mr. Acland's, sir. Daniel Keefe has expressed all confidence, sir."

Dermot walked to the window to get some air.

"A man who really has money," he said. "Miss Knox, I see the children; shall we go out?"

Miss Brown was decorously playing Tom Tiddler's ground upon the gravel. It had never struck any one at Castleknock that if Miss Brown had not flattened her hair and worn severe clothes, she might have been pretty. She had appealing blue eyes, and a small face which severity eclipsed and blotted out.

Mrs. Butler limped to the door behind her son. They all went out on to the front with the dahlias flaming in the beds, and the far-away grey-blue hills showing clear-cut against a silvery sky.

Mollie Knox had been silent for a long time. She could not talk of fox-hunting. She could only look in occasionally, and then long and wish for what she might not do.

Every whisper of a gallop roused her. She rode almost

every day, sometimes on one of Nora's horses, often on a youngster of Dennis's. Hands are gifts. Mollie possessed them. She sat straight but never stiffly; she had the rare gift of sympathy with her horse, which acts as magic on a fretful temper; which coaxes the heart into a jade. But Mollie never dreamt of hunting. The horses she rode now would be wanted when the strain of three days a week fell on the stables. She would see others go out then, or she would drive out in the motor and watch the hunt jog and pound along the road; or gallop past her when hounds were running, and then she knew how she would long to join them. Kindly and optimistic letters from Mr. Allenbury failed to cheer Mollie. She was in the humour to resent cheerfulness as relating to the future. The present was Irish in its dreamy comfort, but its comfort could not last. Mollie was too self-willed to brook the restraint of governessing; the perpetual desire to keep the pupils happy at the expense of discipline had always been with her. The Moriarty children, driving to see her now, accompanied by a sedate lady enwrapped in a decorous manner, greeted her openly.

"Auntie loves Miss Hall," Daisy would say sadly. "Miss Hall agrees with her about everything—and teaches us French verbs."

Dennis played Tom Tiddler energetically. The whisper of evening hissed softly across the world—the flutter of dancing leaves, the twitter of roosting birds, the curious coming hush of night.

Mrs. Butler detached herself from the group and came to where Mollie stood making mild feints towards an energetic miser.

"Shall we take a little walk to the gardens?" said Mrs. Butler affably.

Mollie flushed, and dropped a handful of stones which she was about to throw at Dennis. Mrs. Butler had never taken any notice of her save to take away her sons.

"Shall we?" said Mrs. Butler, laying her hand on a small round arm.

At this point all Tom Tiddler's hoard was reft from beneath his unheeding nose as he stared open-mouthed at his stepmother.

"Well, I'm blest," said Dennis to Dermot, a sudden light gleaming in his eyes.

Sandy here flung out furious comment to the effect that Dennis was no tiddler.

"Tiddle yourself, then," said Dennis weakly. "I'll try to rob."

Mrs. Butler walked solemnly, and not without pain, down the shaded walk to the gardens. Hildebrand's weight was still an aching memory.

"Such a bad example," said Mrs. Butler wrathfully, "that Brandy Hildebrandy person. An intemperate example."

Mollie interposed feebly, remarking that Hildebrand was a strict teetotaler.

"They," said Mrs. Butler, limping emphatically, "are always the worst, because they carry it in their pockets and are afraid to ask for soda-water to mix it with."

The fine old garden sloped upwards to its brick walls. Long years had made it too headstrong to keep tidy. Flowers still straggled, though the old fruit-bushes were replaced by new, and the greenhouses were now weather-proof.

Nora, Mrs. Butler explained, had been poor for too long. She kept that dreadful old retainer of hers, when a Scotch gardener would have this beautiful place fit to look at. "Reidy," said the lady, "is a wasteful, lazy, ignorant old man."

A wrathful face raised itself slowly from behind a hedge of late peas, its lips formed the words "Swheep her!" and the face dropped out of sight. Unfortunately for Mollie, she had seen it, and her attempts at self-control lacked firmness.

Mrs. Butler sat upon a near seat, and feared poor Miss

Knox had contracted a bad cold. She advised cinnamon and eucalyptus.

"A wilderness," said Mrs. Butler. "A wilderness."

The malignant and furious face upraised itself again, followed by a horny hand exhibiting an open pod of huge green peas as a silent testimony of gardenership. "Sw Sweep her!" said the lips once more.

"A very bad cold," went on Mrs. Butler; "your eyes are full of tears, and you are choking." Mrs. Butler coughed. "I miss dear Evelina so much," she said.

Mollie's cold grew suddenly better, cured by a quick hatred of Miss Hall Marten.

"You can keep secrets," beamed Mrs. Butler. "I know it. I had hoped for an attachment with Dermot; but Dermot will probably wed some simple flower: men of the world often do. But Dennis . . . Evelina is interested in Dennis," said the elder lady pleasantly. "She has asked him over to King's Lee. She has offered to give him a variety of horses. She has written twice, and Dennis is my husband's son."

"And Mr. Butler is going?" Mollie asked dully.

"Dennis says he has no clothes." The setting forth of this truth made Mrs. Butler annoyed. "That is, of course, nonsense—shyness. "Yes, Dennis is going," said his step-mother. "I shall do my duty by Dennis. A charming girl, an heiress. Poor Dennis would not know himself as a rich man."

Above the hatred of Miss Hall Marten there sprang into Mollie's mind a bitter dislike of gardens, of melancholy rows of withering peas, of cabbages and apple-trees, of the mass of Michaelmas daisies, the flaunt of dahlias. So Dennis was going to England to marry the sleepy girl of uncertain age. Dennis would have horses and motors and houses; and she—she was only little Mollie Knox, who might have been fairly well off if some mistake had not been made.

"That will be very nice," said Mollie firmly. Still

thinking of the rows of vegetables, she heard Mrs. Butler asking for a promise not to *breathe* a word to Dennis, not a word of this confidence.

Mollie promised in weary tones. She turned gladly towards the house to go back.

Old Reidy raised himself into full view as they left.

"Thim is lies," he said sagely. "That wan is as full of scheemin' as an ant."

With a seraphic smile Reidy walked stiffly to a basket full of little green lettuce plants which Mrs. Butler was to take home, emptied them out, and replaced them with some seedlings, sown by mistake, of the tenderest summer variety.

"Even the Ilielandther cannot hatch them from the frosts," said Reidy happily.

They met Dennis where the roses sprawled damply over the arch of the garden door. He said he had been sent to look for his mother. He was followed closely by Dermot, and in the narrow walk Mrs. Butler forged ahead, taking her son with her.

"Come back to the garden," said Dennis softly.

"I hate gardens!" brought out Mollie fiercely. "They are all peas and cabbages and earth—earth for graves."

Then Miss Knox picked and dissected some holly leaves with extreme care and vigour.

"To the stables then," suggested Dennis, mildly alarmed at this outburst; "but perhaps you'd object to horses there."

Mollie smiled faintly. "When you go to England," she began, her promise forgotten.

"I am not," said Dennis firmly, "going to England in a four-year-old coat and breeches and gaiters. They might want me to go to church, and then turn me out for being improperly dressed. I'm *not* going. Come to the stables. Let's see Araminta's grey; as it is a pig you won't mind it being in a loose box."

Mollie gave up holly leaves. She asked Dennis why he was so determined to stay in Ireland.

"I've got four young horses which I cannot possibly leave," said Dennis simply.

Miss Knox replied "Oh," extremely huffily, and went slowly towards the house.

The second post, which had to be fetched, brought her a letter from Mr. Grimes. It was full of stiff friendliness, and it contained an invitation to stay at Lesser Cheriton for a week. Susannah would be delighted. He enclosed a snapshot taken at his door, one showing a squarely comfortable house, with most of its windows securely closed, a glimpse of the tabernacle in the distance, and his victoria at the door. Susannah Grimes, smiling broadly, stood by his side, with "Oh, delightful" palpably upon her lips.

"A most extraordinary girl," said Mrs. Butler coldly, looking at the photograph, "and Dermot actually wishes me to ask her to stay here. He says he has already asked her himself." Mrs. Butler sighed. Dermot's word was generally law.

The car hummed off into the gathering gloom of the evening. Dennis was asked to stay to dinner, Standish came over, and the tale of horse and hound rang through each course as it had in the afternoon.

"Watson told us to-day," Mollie said—her gloom had fled—"that he was not quite satisfied with Red Fancy. His off fore is inclined to fill a little after work."

After Standish had recovered from Araminta's question of "What with?" Hildebrand broke in in lively fear. They looked on the National as a race already won.

"There could not be anything really wrong," he said tremulously.

"Plenty of time to come right," said Sandy gravely, "and two good youngsters coming on behind him. Watson is already jumping Martinique."

Young Mr. Hannyside and Miss Mellicombe lost all appetite for dinner. Allowances were not as property. The diamonds lay at the bank; the big house in England was empty. Was this to go on year after year, while four-

footed brutes made futile efforts to come home first at Aintree?

If Red Fancy did not win, another twelve months would loom in front.

"If he does not win?" gasped Araminta.

"It's no use thinking of those trout and salmon," said Sandy unkindly, "it's not, Nora."

Araminta, in bitter accents, wished to know what trout had to do with racing, and she also considered the interruption unkind.

"It was wicked, cruel, malicious!" snorted Araminta furiously. "I shall see Watson to-morrow. I shall tell him we will have a lawsuit if he does not see that the horse's legs are kept properly empty. I shall tell him we will not continue to be robbed by Allenbury."

"I shall tell him too," said Hildebrand.

"If Red Fancy fails," said Sandy, "you can move your stud, for I'll resign; but the moving will not upset the will, Hildebrand."

Standish gloomily helped himself to a savoury, and said they had better buy race games and make up their minds to it.

"This time fifty years," said Mr. Blundell cheerfully, "you'll be wondering why you ever thought you'd break the bad luck of the stables."

"Angels on horseback, sir," said Phillips pleasantly to Hildebrand.

Hildebrand refused ungraciously, with a suspicious look.

Mr. Watson next morning had to receive more visitors than he cared to see. Dennis had stayed the night. He generally left some clothes at Castleknock. Standish came to see what was wrong with the crack.

A look at Red fancy, big and blooming, reassured them. It was nothing, Watson said, a mere knock over some fence, perhaps; nothing.

Watson had settled down to Ireland with curious ease. He said he had never kept his horses so well. Two of the

youngsters had been out to get them used to publicity, and were shaping well. One had picked up a race, greatly to Hildebrand's liking—until he found out the value of the stakes.

"You will see to him, Watson," commanded Araminta. "See he gets no more knocks. For if this horse does not win we shall dispute the will, and you will lose everything."

Mr. Watson looked respectfully unintimidated. Having presented this expression for at least half a minute, he changed it to one of reserved boredom as he remarked that 'osses were 'osses, and 'e never knew of the Lord comin' down to make 'em miracles.

Then, as the kindly doctor who places a mustard plaster on the spot where his patient has already endured a turpentine stripe, he said blandly that a new hay-shed must be erected before the winter, and that a complete new lot of horse clothing must be ordered.

"The old 'osses," said Watson, "can take on with the old rugs."

"The old brutes," said Hildebrand as he stalked away, wondering angrily what a hay-barn would cost. He paused to presume that if the stud was moved Sandy would allow him for it, and went on again when Nora said briskly they did not want it in the least.

But when Hildebrand and Araminta had disappeared, Sandy grew really gloomy.

Red Fancy was a good horse. He had been sixth the year before, but there were other good horses, and the National fences were looming masses of might. There was no real reason to hope that the Hannyside luck would turn. Watson said placidly they had better keep their eyes on Waterford's Pride, a four-year-old which had won several small Irish races.

"In four or five years' time," said Watson.

"In four or five years' time," said Sandy irritably. "By that time, Watson, your Mr. Hannyside will have burnt

down the Normantin stables . . . for I won't keep you on here."

Watson looked plaintively at the clouds which chased each other across the sky. "A bit in hand," he told them, "might be better than annoyance, and there was room for a careful man in Cahervalley."

"Delia, I presume," said Nora as they went away, "will not go to England."

Hildebrand had started on his daily practice on Phillips's stumpy cob, and as they came to the front door they beheld him, an unwilling and perspiring planet revolving about a grey sun at the full length of the reins.

"The stick, sir," said Phillips, doubling down the steps, "quite forgot to tell him the grey fears a stick."

"It was Franky Mack, an' he havin' a drop in that used to get off and belt him," explained Mikkelo, also hurrying to the rescue. "An' he calls it to mind still."

Hildebrand, it appeared, had got off to pick up his cap and had endeavoured to get up again with his stick held out. The result had been ten minutes' heated dance across the field with the cob refusing to be caught.

"Only peculiarity he possesses, sir," explained Phillips, removing the stick. "Greatly regret I forgot to explain, sir."

Hildebrand also regretted it, and not quite so politely. When he had again got into the saddle he rode off sulkily. The cob was so extremely quiet that after a time he boldly sailed it at a hollow in the field, then at three stones across a gap, from there to a low and ditchless bank and then round again, now contemptuously careless and full of pride.

"There is not the faintest doubt of it, Phillips can ride," said Standish suddenly.

Phillips had come out on the tall bay. With open jaws and whistling loudly the great brute swept round the field, was put at full speed at a high fence and jumped it with more zeal than skill. The bay would gallop, his long stride

ate up the ground. Phillips disappeared down a favourite school of Nora's, riding with complete fearlessness.

Hildebrand watched him peevishly. He knew he would never have dared to go away at that pace, to ride so carelessly at those fences, and the knowledge riled him.

The lawn at Castleknock grew thick with horses now. Nora and Sandy both rode out and cantered away to the lower fields, then Araminta on the mare whose tail never flaunted at an acute angle now, and last of all Dennis Butler and Mollie. Mollie's light little figure swayed to every movement of her young horse. She sat straight but never stiffly; her face glowed with the joy of riding. She sat down to a lively buck, got her horse's head up and sent him off at a canter, coming back with her cheeks pink.

"Oh, but he can go," said Mollie.

Dennis, urging his somewhat lumpy horse past a stone which he took umbrage at, said he wished all the shows were not over.

"You would be worth a fortune at them," he said a little wistfully.

Araminta brought the unwilling grey across the field and looked severely at Mollie.

"It is merely unfitting yourself," she said furtively, "I warn you."

Mollie replied that she did not unfit herself at present over the fences, she would bear up. She followed Dennis to a wide bank; beyond that there were some low stone walls and a couple of open ditches which made excellent practice for young horses.

Araminta flushed wrathfully. She did not like being overlooked. Taking up her whip, she got the mare into an amble and came at the bank herself. The grey mare lurched on to the top with an unwilling scramble. There was a widish ditch outside, seeing it, Araminta clutched the reins nervously and Twilight obeyed the jerk only too willingly. She stood on the top of the bank leisurely shuffling her feet to find a safe resting-place.

Araminta hit her mildly, the ditch became alarming.

"Come back then," said Araminta nervously.

The grey mare stood still blandly. She saw succulent grass and she began to pull at it, taking her head away until her fore feet were over the brink of the ditch, and Araminta began to shriek for help.

"Gracious! the brute has stuck upon the top," said Mollie looking back.

Dennis, looking farther back still, said heartlessly that with the help of Heaven and Phillips she might not stick there long, and they might as well ride back to pick up bits. He had spied the bay horse unmistakably out of hand, coming down at the very spot where Twilight grazed so placidly.

Phillips shouted warning. Araminta merely replied with a request for help. Before there was time for any further explanation Perfection had arrived, coming too fast to check himself, smote the grey a smack upon her quarters, which sent her bounding out into the next field in surprised terror.

"Very cleverly jumped, miss," said Phillips nervously; the bump had stopped the bay.

Araminta disentangled herself from the grey's mane and asked Phillips, uncertainly, if that was the usual way to urge on animals on the centre of a fence.

"Exceedingly easy way, madame," said Phillips blandly now.

Dennis said, "Heaven forgive you, Phillips," audibly.

"Quite impossible to avoid it, sir," said Phillips in a whisper. "But lady took it all in good part, sir. Better go home by the gap, I should fancy, sir."

The grey mare showed such an acute fear of the bay, that she kicked at him whenever he approached her. Phillips had only to ride up behind, and she rushed at the lower gap into the next field with lion-like decision.

Araminta felt that jumping was quite easy, as she got over her second gap.

"If I could only ride for ever and always," said Mollie, "I should never want anything else on earth."

Having made this speech and looked round for sympathy, she was surprised to see Mr. Dennis Butler riding the lumpy horse back at the gap which he had just got over without a mistake. Dennis did not catch Mollie until they were at the stables, and then he appeared to be in a sulky humour.

"Rather have a horse than anything?" he said, helping Mollie down.

Mollie sighed a little. "Than anything I can ever have," she said.

Hildebrand was excited at lunch. He had had a letter from Mr. Grimes, and they were enlarging the place of worship at Lesser Cheriton. They had five new attendants at service. Miss Grimes sent kind regards.

Hildebrand wanted to talk of it, but his small boat of conversation was swept away by the usual wintry flood.

"Hit the mare a bang on top of the bank, and said he did it on purpose."

"Every one knew that brute in his own country, before he came here. A steam winch wouldn't hold him."

"They're not my stamp, but he sells them. . . . What's that, Hildebrand, five new what . . . Bones, whose bones?" from Sandy. "I'd no idea there was hunting at Lesser Cheriton."

"Is there nothing," said Hildebrand crossly, "nothing thought or talked of all the winter except fox-hunting?"

"We do a day with the stag, sometimes," said Standish sadly.

CHAPTER XIV

For now I know it is no gentle chase,
When fearfully the dogs exclaim aloud.

—*Venus and Adonis.*

THE day of an opening meet dawns each year with a fresh crisp of excitement, with hopes and fears born with its dim morning. A new season is with us. Bits have been burnished to silver; saddles polished to unpleasing state of slippery gloss. Grooms are up early, feverishly busy, each one anxious that his horse shall outvie his rivals.

Anxieties are thick upon us. Patsy is lugubriously afeared the ould black's foremost leg will never stand, "thickenin' up it is afther work every day." And the old veteran is an ever-present joy; one of the things which may never be replaced. The brown mare is much too fat. One looks at her, her sleek and blooming coat, and almost fears there may be a run from the first covert.

The bay youngster is working just a little light already, and yesterday, after a gallop, there were qualms as to his staying powers. He died away palpably up hill, he laboured in deep ground.

Who does not know the hopes and fears of the stable before the season commences?

That bay may be the best horse in Ireland, he may replace old Warrior. He has jumped gloriously, he can gallop, but if he cannot stay; the flying Cahervalley pack will soon leave him behind them.

Tongues wag fast the night before of horses and runs, of forage and saddles; of where we shall find foxes, and where we shall not.

"Rotten fellow, M'Cormac, never bothers to keep a fox.

No one ought to speak to him. What's the use of drawing Ballylusky? It was a blank all last year. Sheer waste of time running through it. So we grumble and yet hope as a clumping knock heralds Patsy and 'orders for the morning.'"

"The old horse for the meet. He won't go so mad in the crowd, Patsy."

Blighting comment from Patsy, "Faix, then he laid me out on top ov his ears this mornin'. There isn't one of them can throw the buck Warrior can when he lays his mind to it."

"The mare, then, and shall we chance the bay?"

"Better let Tim ride the bay an' take him aisy. Too soon to be flusterin' him."

"Very well then, that's settled."

Then morning, nosing greyly through the curtains.

"Is it fine, Dawson?"

"It is not, but rainin', sir."

Then after a pause, "'Tis only a misht like, clearin' off. Patsy says the day will hould."

Grey clouds race across a pearly background, but little patches of faint blue peep behind them; soft silver glow of sunshine comes light behind the hurrying clouds. A west wind blows gently. It is not too hot, it is a perfect hunting day.

Far off the hills crouch, indigo and dim, with golden streaks of light on their sides; the wind shakes raindrops from the boughs with a cheerful whip. There is wild bustle in the stables, a sound of hurrying feet, of raised voices. Patsy dives in and out to eat a spasmodic breakfast. He's all cheer now the rug falls to show old Warrior sleek and blooming. A little on the big side, but no horse looks better as he starts. Tim, on the bay, is bidden to go carefully, and remarks dolorously, "that isn't the ways he'd like to go, but the ways the bay'll take him."

Then the car seems to know it is hunting-day. She starts with a purr of engines on their best behaviour. She

scuttles off into the crowd, and really looks out herself for fresh horses.

An endless string seems going to the meet, so that one wonders how long the first one will have to wait, and how fast the tail will have to go to be there in time, for the Master moves off punctually.

New pink shines bravely ; horses sidle and buck, full of excitement.

Fears are dead things with Patsy now. He beams with pride as he rubs old Warrior with the inevitable duster.

"Out like a two-year-old he came, the crossest horse on the road. Sorra a fear that leg won't sthand. Wasn't he beltin' the road with it as if 'twasn't his own at all. Didn't Mr. Butler call out to me, 'The old horse was never better, Patsy?' An' there wasn't one but was starin' at the colt goin' by. Signsby, he were near to be med bits of be a smother an' ran away with Tim ; but sure there was no harrum in him at all ; that was play."

The bay, in a white lather, is at the present endeavouring to play his heels upon everything he can find handy, and when checked by Tim, plunges up irritably. We look at him proudly. He is the find of our lives. Old Warrior will be well replaced.

Off at last, jogging and bumping at the good old hound trot ; spatters falling on shining boots ; horses kicking and squealing. The silver light has grown stronger, clouds drift, soft as smoke, to a clear horizon. Green fields, green banks all round ; blind tangle of leaves about the ditches as yet, but that does not trouble us to-day. The old horses are not to be put down by any blindness of growth.

A scurry from Dromineen, long enough for unfit horses—two miles, and a fat cub run to his death. Then on to Ballylusky, grumbling as we go. And then, surprise. The glorious yelp and yowl of tongues ring through the woods. Two cubs break out across the park. Who abuses

M'Cormac now? We ride to where he watches, and tell him what a fine day it is cheerfully.

"Two a-foot, splendid!" we add.

M'Cormac turns a thoughtful profile; it may or may not be with intent that he says, as he rides away, that it is more threatening than it was in the morning.

So the day wanes. One of the Ballylusky foxes runs hard, right away up the hills, and gets to ground there. Watch the tail come labouring up, and do we see one which labours almost last? A light bay, galloping as though he had to root up each piece of land he moved over. We look and say it does not matter. The mare, far as she is, has faced the hill like a bird.

Tim whispers dolorously, as we ride home, "The minnit I axed him to face the hill there was the ind of him. *He's* one to be sellin', sir, an' he fat. *He* is no use at all."

A hopeless non-stayer; but Patsy smiles when we reach the stables; the doubtful tendon is flat and clean. If the colt is no use, what matter, it is tea time. Some fool will take him for his looks, and we'll buy another.

So come and go the opening days, with the youngsters growing and the old ones passing, obeying the law of life. And so some day for us will come a year when there is no excitement in it, when hopes and fears will give place to wistful memories. And we will watch the grey clouds lower, listen to the faint patter of the rain, turn our eyes from gleams of sunshine, and say, to give ourselves false comfort, "It's a wretched day to be out, anyway."

The opening meet dawned at Castleknock with perhaps a little excitement than in other houses.

Nora was out by seven, and rushing round every stable in the place. Mikkelo, now a groom for the hunting season, endeavoured to do his own work and every one else's, with extreme detriment to his own and some confusion to the others.' The cook fried six extra eggs, and reviled the hens for ill-behaviour and laziness because she

could not do seven. The heat of getting things ready was on the house.

"Mary, did you forgit to lay the iron on the missus's tie? God forgive ye. There it is, and 'twill be hot on her neck now. I have *not* the flask, Mikkelo. Patsy has it, he keeps it always. Isn't it there on the shelf, oberight me? Well, Patsy laid it there, if 'tis. Phillips, have ye the corkshrew? The missus says, Mrs. Cafferty, if breakfast is not ready in two minnits, she'll be ragin'. What's the use of saying ye waited for the lasht eggs to be laid? 'Twill only be teasin' her."

"Did I take the masther's boot hooks, Misther Phillips? I think I had one in me hand yesterday gettin' out a sixpence I let roll under the big press. Clap yer eyes down, for the hook might be inside yet."

Dignified remonstrances from Phillips meeting with scant attention. A suggestion that Maria should herself kneel upon the floor returned with "God save ye, an' the spoons not rubbed up on me yet."

Araminta's door was constantly opened as she wailed for assistance. Her tie would not fasten. Her gaiters—she had not bought boots—showed an obstinate desire to gape.

Hildebrand had had his nerves strained by the delay of Danny Keefe to finish his hunting-garments until the last moment. The village tailor appeared smiling at ten the night before, with a large parcel in his arms. "Stitch for stitch, an' seam for seam, I have them imatated," he said proudly, "as ye towlt me to, sir. An' I could not do it before, sir, with an order on me to make Cloghisys's weddin' suit, an' he threatenin' to bate me if 'twasn't done. An' two fine-draws in ould Mr. Claney's huntin' coat too."

The suit had arrived too late to be tried on, but it lay ready in sombre newness in Hildebrand's room. A coat of sober black, a grey waistcoat, and thick yellow cord breeches; all of the cheapest material he could find.

October had brought a new excitement to Hildebrand. Miss Grimes was coming to Castle Butler for the first meet. She had written to accept the invitation, but she had made no response to four pages of fervent outpourings from Hildebrand when he wrote to express his joy.

"You will see me out upon a hunter," he said. "In Rome one must do as the Romans. I have purchased a beautiful bay animal; a little headstrong, but nothing in the hands of a skilled horseman. Mrs. Butler tells me you come over on Sunday, and we shall meet on Monday at the opening meet of the foxhounds."

"I will call in and ride on with you," said Standish Blundell, who came to tea on Sunday. "I want to see the start."

Through all the bustle Mollie Knox looked on with wistful, clouded eyes. She had longed to ride, but she would not take the horse which Nora offered her. She knew that it was one of the old stagers, and would be wanted on the Wednesday.

"It's nonsense, not riding," said Nora; "nonsense, child"; but she said it very kindly, and insisted on Mollie driving the pony to see the fun.

"I wish," said Nora one afternoon as she went up the steps slowly, "that I could see what old Reggie put in his letter. I will make the girl stay here until I know, and it may all be nothing."

Mrs. Acland then expressed a severe desire to inflict punishment on the departed Mr. Hannyside. "He knew those two would do nothing for her," said Nora wrathfully. "Or perhaps he relied on their convictions being real, and thought they would refuse taking the racers."

"He never thought that," said Sandy decidedly. "He has got some joke up his sleeve, and I wish that laughing time had arrived. That Butler boy?" questioned Sandy.

"Which one?" said Nora. "Dermot is not allowed to look, and Dennis can't afford to, unless the joke is a real joke after all."

The day of this particular first meet was gustily fine. Little brown clouds drove over a light blue sky, leaving chill patters of rain as they passed; the wind which rollicked up with them was fresh and cool. The meet was only two miles from Droveen, so that there was no flurry of early breakfast. Nora took hers comfortably in her everyday clothes, but Araminta came fully equipped, with the grey habit opening over a waistcoat of cerulean blue, and a starched tie catching her severely just under her chin.

Araminta said loftily that it was so like Mrs. Acland not to be ready in time. "You will rush off," she said, "at the last minute, and fling on everything in an uncomfortable hurry."

"As well," said Nora cheerily, "as in an uncomfortable leisure. I like a good breakfast on hunting days."

At the end of this sentence she looked meaningly at Miss Mellicombe, who was visibly choked by her tie.

"The glowworm shows the matin to be near," said Standish, coming in, "and I'm breakfasting here. The two old aunts have gone on their annual visit to their cousin something, so here I am."

"Tell the cook," said Nora, "to do some more eggs."

Maud returned to say that the cook had "seven extry in the brown dish, she havin' delayed breakfast waitin' on the seventh." So Standish was provided for.

"It's Hildebrand that I came to see," he said mournfully, "in Danny Keefe's clothes."

Araminta, who detested Standish, remarked snappily that "Hildebrand was not at all likely to appear in clothes belonging to Danny Keefe"; and she coughed.

"Take a knife to it," said Standish thoughtfully, "or it will cut your ears. A knife, and fold the edges over."

Araminta fingered her tie and flushed haughtily. The sound of a raised voice came from outside, blaring heavily, intermixed with Phillips's smooth replies.

"Send for Danny Keefe. Certainly, sir. If any one can

be found to fetch him, sir. Rather ill-fitting, sir ; sir—certainly ; but perhaps alteration. . . . Would advise breakfast now, sir. No use killing Daniel, sir ; better eat breakfast, sir.”

At this point Hildebrand, pallid with rage, burst into the dining-room.

Standish got up. Nora dropped a piece of bacon into her tea. Sandy sat in outraged amazement.

Hildebrand was correctly attired in the black coat and yellow breeches, but, save that the coat covered him, it did not otherwise appear to aspire further. Its tail began just at his waist ; it hung in folds across his back, gaped lower down ; the breeches did not meet the ready-made boots, which showed such painful affection for Hildebrand’s fat calves.

“I—er—oh, good gracious!” said Sandy. “Weren’t you fitted, Hildebrand?” Sandy abandoned himself to unseemly chuckles.

“He took my measure,” yelled Hildebrand, “and fitted pieces of it ; and the fool——”

“Danny Keefe,” said Phillips, “is here, sir. The clothes, it appears, being, so to speak, on his mind, he came up lest there should be alterations.”

“Here’s snip and nip and cut and slish and slash . . . here is the note of fashion,” said Standish, walking slowly round Hildebrand.

“Alterations!” roared Hildebrand. “Remaking, with new stuff!”

“Bring him in,” said Nora faintly.

Danny Keefe, whose deformed leg had doubtless made him take up the art of tailoring, limped in nervously. Behind his nervous air lurked one of dogged stupidity, and a certain assertiveness.

“Do you see ; you—man!” wailed Hildebrand wildly. “Do you see your work?”

“Jakus!” said Mr. Keefe softly, and made no further comment.

Mollie Knox had given up trying not to, and was laughing as quietly as she could.

Danny Keefe skated round his clothes, his hand held to his half-shaven lip.

"Do you expect a gentleman to hunt in them, Danny?" said Standish gloomily. "Do you now; and what was at you?"

"Seam for seam and stitch for stitch," said Daniel Keefe firmly. "'The exact same as the copy was me orthers, and then ye can't go wrong,' he said. Wasn't I up with thries on, and he near to whip the face off me because I said he must have the coat aisy when he's round and fat." Here Mr. Keefe laid his hand on his own lean waist-line. "'Copy Misther Acland's,' says he; 'that's from a London tailor. None of ye're own idees,' says he. Bejabers, I don' it, as ye can all see. If the masther'd peel off he'd slip into them same now as if 'twas a snail gettin' back to his shell. Will yer honour let me lay the coat on ye?" said Dan unhappily, "for isn't it hard on me to be blemt now for doin' what I was towld to? 'Copy,' says he, and I copied," Mr. Keefe gulped.

"The cut—the style!" cried Hildebrand. "Good heavens, man—not the size. Not the size, you idiot!"

Sandy was two inches shorter than Hildebrand. He was broad across the chest and leaner in the flank. As I have said, the tails of the coat began above Hildebrand's waist. The yellow breeches were also decidedly too short and unhappily tight.

"Short of cloth I was too," said Danny stolidly, "pinchin' and strivin' to make it do. If you had but to let me be, sir, I could have made ye a ridin' suit as good as any in all Ireland."

Hildebrand sat down in bitter gloom. He cast curses at Daniel Keefe until the tailor grew sullen, and showed some inclination to reply.

"There is a coat of mine," said Standish, "over here, one I never took back after a wet day last year. He can

wear it. And Dan says he can fix the mustard shorts, so eat your breakfast, Hildebrand, it might be your last : there's always that chance on a hunting morning," said Standish gravely.

Hildebrand, with a pained expression, took a second egg, but he ate it without appetite. If anything happened to him Northlap would pass to Araminta. The fortitude of his religion did not prepare him for resignation on that point.

"Hannan wishes to know, sir, if you purchased the heavy bit for to-day," said Phillips from the door. "Hannan says, sir, he has only the shabby snaffle with cracked reins, sir."

"Which you rode him in?" said Hildebrand crossly.

"Pardon me, sir, used my only double bridle, sir," said Phillips.

Hildebrand broke some toast viciously. He snapped out that Mr. Watson could provide bridles, and directed that one of the newest was to be immediately procured.

"Racing snaffles," said Phillips softly, as he left the room.

Hildebrand's meanness had prevented him from buying a bit—to him snaffles and curbs were very much alike—and he did not see why he should buy when the saddle-room was thick with shining bits and supple reins.

When, later, he got his plump form into Standish's coat, he surveyed himself in a long glass, immersed by alternate waves of distrust and enthusiasm. Standish's coat was not a super-excellent fit, yet Hildebrand thought that it became him well. He was not so certain of the cheap hunting-hat which he had purchased in Cahervalley, nor with the hurried cobble of patching and lacing with which his yellow breeches had been induced to meet his top boots. But Hildebrand thought of Susannah as he took up the ashplant which he had borrowed from Watson. His gloves were lemon colour, made of what the shopman at McSweeney's had termed "rale doghide."

It was not until they reached the doorstep that Hildebrand recollected with a qualm that he must face the meet on his own horse. He had been riding Phillips's cob regularly.

The big bay was sidling and chafing at the door, held by Hannan, who had been so busy all the morning that he had had no time to exercise his charge. He told Mikkelo of his forgetfulness.

"And Monday, too," said Mikkelo reprovingly.

"Sunday or Wednesday, he would make off any ways in this bit," said Hannan resignedly. "An' that same is so much off me mind." Then, grinning softly, he added that "'twas a murtherin' pity one could not mash up the two horses and make a divide," for the grey stood with drooping head, sorely resenting the certainty of exercise.

"Ye will not howld him in this bit, sir," said Hannan cheerfully to Hildebrand, "whatever chance ye might have with the curb I axed ye to buy."

Hildebrand, looking nervously at Perfection, suggested borrowing one from Mr. Acland.

"He has but three, an' they out," said Hannan. "I thried that before I got ye the one above, that is only fit for guiding racehorses in thracks. Lay yer hand on his head, Mikkelo, awhile, while I puts up the lady."

It took a great deal of time to settle Araminta in her saddle; she climbed to it with care, but once there a multitude of straps and adjustments kept her fidgeting for ten minutes.

"That will do," said Araminta at last. "Yes, now they can hold your horse, Hildebrand. Hannan is so exceedingly clumsy. Go on, darling. Chirrup."

"Will I give her a wallop to hearten her, miss?" said Hannan, dealing an echoing smack on the grey's quarters.

The result was the nervous prancing of Perfection round the gravel, with Mikkelo clinging to his bridle.

Delay and unwonted rest had upset the bay; he received Hildebrand with grudging distrust; he flung him to his

neck with a kick and back to his quarters with a rear, and then he passed the others at a gallop.

Phillips, who was coming out later on, watched the start. "Should have impressed the safety of the cob upon him," said Phillips to Mikkelo, "but I feared the trick of lying down, Mikkelo, awkward in a hunt. Perhaps though, for Mr. Acland's sake," said Phillips regretfully, "funerals so very upsetting to a household, Mikkelo."

"An' him that would have no waste," returned Mikkelo, "but the throuble of his berryin' is all that would be out of him."

Araminta, diligently flicking Twilight with her stick, told Hildebrand that she really feared his horse might prove too much for him. "Standish's mare might, after all, have been better," she said. "Some people take to riding and others do not, Hildebrand," and Araminta sat to one side contentedly.

Hildebrand gave back a breathless answer concerning cows and blood horses, most of its bitterness being lost amidst the bay's uneasy prancings.

"Looks very well this morning, sir," said Watson, riding up. "A very fine horse until you begin to look at—that—er—is into him, Mr. Hannyside, and should gallop too."

The road was thick now with hunters, traps, and motors. The bay subsided suddenly to a rapid jog, which he kept up, despite all hauling at his head. A light racing snaffle is not the best of bits for a puller, and the big horse was revelling in it. Araminta, on the other hand, found great difficulty in keeping her grey from dropping back to a stumbling walk. Mr. Costello, coming out of his lane, riding a light middled black which had been abandoned as the worst rearer in Ireland, heard himself hailed peevishly.

"I do not think this animal is sufficiently spirited," said Araminta, "for hunting purposes."

Bill Costello, dropping behind surreptitiously dealt the grey a swish with the lash.

"Howld her together, miss," he said, "that's all she wants, an' use a spur. It isn't nice for a lady to be hawlin' and draggin' on silly buck-jumpers all the day. That is a real lady's mare I tell ye. At the end of the day, when others is wore out, she'll be the same as she is now. Is it a snaffle," said Mr. Costello, suddenly changing his tone, "that yer cousin has in the bay horse's mouth?"

As Araminta replied loftily that it was a bit procured from their trainer, Costello said some prayers to himself and remarked aloud that he was sorrowful he had bizness up beyond, and might not be long out hunting that day.

"A snaffle?" muttered Costello. "God save us—a snaffle to one that makes mock of a gag. There is but one thing that can save him," confided the dealer gloomily to his helper. "That the horse may make up his mind that's a bundle rowlin' above ov him, and he might sthop to kick it off."

The meet was at four cross roads. The ordinary traffic of the country crawled, with due apology, through wedged masses of horses and motors. Grooms were polishing; owners getting up; hunters were sidling and backing and squealing in their lightness of heart.

Sandy turned to watch the arrivai of his charges. Araminta, unaware that Costello was flicking on the mare assiduously, was bumping to an unusually lively trot; Hildebrand's bay, with its head held straight out, bored a sullen way through the crowd, until Patsy, jumping from the young one he was riding, took Perfection by the bridle and held him.

Hildebrand then recovered his breath and looked round pompously. The owner of Red Fancy and the Northlap stud had now arrived at the meet to be looked at.

"Can't ride, can he?" said Derick Knox Harding to Sandy. Sandy replied that even in his own worst days he had never been as bad, and that Hildebrand was on a puller which he wouldn't buy a bit for.

"He mustn't think because I look mild I can't talk," said Derick grinning.

"Lead this animal on," said Hildebrand to Patsy. "Good-morning, Knox Harding. I am looking forward to hunting here, I hear you are a skilled huntsman."

Derick replied pleasantly that he trusted Hildebrand would be able to look back on it. "For with that bit on. . . if your horse pulls. . . ." said Derick thoughtfully. "But hope you'll enjoy it, Hannyside."

"Here! Take that brute away from my hounds. Pull him back. Stop him, turn him!" suddenly shouted the Master.

As Perfection, in response to a frantic jerk, merely opened his mouth and kicked again, Hildebrand made excuse.

"It was the dog which tickled his heels," he said, sawing vainly. "I assure you, the dog there tickled. . . ."

When Perfection had stood nearly straight on end in response to a slash of Derick's whip, and Patsy had caught the horse and backed him, Hildebrand remarked with dignity that he feared Mr. Knox Harding had a most excitable temper. "A person of my position," said Hildebrand irritably, "should be treated with due respect. I am most annoyed."

As they jogged to the first covert—a patch of dark green gorse on a steep green hill side, Hildebrand caught sight of the Butlers' motor coming up one of the side roads. A good deal of bright hat marked the presence of Miss Grimes. His endeavour to stop the bay was completely futile, so he was carried past almost unnoticed—his waving lemon-gloved hand alone marking him.

"Mr. Hannyside on a horse. How delightful," said Susannah, giggling.

"Mr. Acland," called out Mrs. Butler, "that youth will hurt some one, he cannot ride, and if Nora has forgotten to lock up. . . it's just the morning he would indulge in alcohol."

"How delightful!" said Miss Grimes, "the hounds, I mean. Oh, if I could ride a horse. Oh, Mr. Butler——"

Dermot, immaculate in swallow-tailed pink, and canary waistcoat of perfect cut, got on a light brown mare of some value. He looked well riding, and if he was no thruster went along quietly, often missing hunts because he was too lazy to hustle for a start. His mother paid any sum for a horse which pleased her, so that he was generally well mounted.

"Oh—oh—oh," said Susannah, "oh, where is the fox?"

Dermot hinted that the fox was in the covert; he then advised Miss Grimes and her father to leave the motor and stand on a bank which he pointed out, where they would probably see the whole hunt pass by. Then he strolled off, and Susannah's eyes followed him rapturously.

"Oh, delightful!" she said.

Mrs. Butler, examining the crowd, remarked unhappily that she did not see Dennis. "He went off for his horse; he would not come with us," she said uneasily. "He could not. Oh, there is that Knox girl—thank goodness, not riding."

Mollie, driving a tubby pony with supreme carelessness, had forgotten to feel sad, and was smiling from Dennis to Dermot, as they rode close to the governess-car. Dennis's pink was old and stained, but the brown five-year-old, Gameboy, which he rode, was one of the best-looking horses at the meet. Lengthy and powerful, with both quality and substance, if he did not go wrong, Dennis's oats and hay ran some chance of being paid for.

"If he were mine," said Dermot, "I would not jump him over a fence, but Dennis risks everything."

Dennis said he bought them to make hunters of, and just then Mollie saw Miss Grimes.

"The delightful girl."

"She is certainly good-humoured," answered Dermot, looking rather doubtfully at Mollie's pretty face. Mollie was not always easy to get on with.

Capaghmere gorse is thick. Hounds had not opened when the straggling crowd got to the top of the hill and settled down to wait. The first faint whimper sounded as Susannah and her father clambered to the bank to watch.

The bay horse had grown suddenly sober. He had come up the hill decorously, amid a kicking, bucking crowd, but he walked round and round exactly as he chose, with his neck stiffened and his ears laid back ill-temperedly.

"They've found!" said Sandy.

The whimper was taken up and deepened to a crashing chorus. Hats were crammed down. Bucking horses stood quiet now, shivering with excitement; pried heads rose and fell through the close gorse. There he was.

A little red-brown thing leaped into view, dropped lightly from the fence, and slipped up the field, a perfect volley of yells greeting him, and at least twenty eager spirits galloped off hotly in his wake.

Being a mere cub, who had not realized that safety lay in making his point, the fox wheeled from the yells and slipped down a hedge back to covert. Hounds came flashing out up the field, spreading out, then darting away to over-run it where their fox had turned back. In the mad rush for the first gap, Hildebrand recognized his impotence. He was carried away in the crush. He saw steep places under his horse's feet; he felt the lurch and slip on a rock, he heard shouts which he feared were meant for him, next moment the crowd seemed to fall back, he saw a clear space in front, and felt the bay lengthen his stride as he, too, saw it.

Some one shrieked "Hold hard!" Some one else took it up. Hildebrand, aware of a long green field, and the blissful ease of seeing no need to stop, took no notice. He was, in fact, inclined to be elated. The hounds were just in front, and he was already proving his prowess as a rider. He knew one ought to keep close to them. That their heads were up bore no meaning to Hildebrand; he

had caught sight of Susannah on the bank, and he hoped she was looking at him.

Next moment Perfection galloped straight through the pack, and Derick Knox Harding tried to remember so many things to say that he could only gasp incoherently.

Pansy rushed limping from a blow, Duchess sat down and yelled over a bruised rib. Treason and Frantic, treasured joys of Derick's heart, appeared to be badly hurt. Perfection flew on down the hill, carrying Hildebrand out of earshot.

"One of Costello's cures. A runaway brute. Who let him buy it?" said Derick furiously. "Why the—what the—were you all?"

When the Master had run down, Standish explained sadly that Hildebrand Hannyside had done his own purchasing.

"Oh, look at Hildebrand," cried Mollie, who had joined Miss Grimes. "Look!"

Dermot Butler, in horrified tones, said that Hildebrand was being run away with.

"It looks delightful," said Susannah. "Look, papa."

"And, good heavens! he has killed four hounds," said Dermot faintly.

Standish, looking at the now vacant sky-line, said it would be much better for Hildebrand if he died quietly out of sight below there than to come up and find out what he'd done.

At this moment Dermot caught Miss Grimes's hand and held it, and Standish, in blood-curdling whispers, bade Mr. Grimes to be still as mice. For, right beside them, came the now determined cub, undeterred by anything save the desire to leave that pack of yelling hounds behind him.

"The hounds will come just here," breathed Mollie, dancing on the bank. "They must follow the fox."

"You'll be down," said Standish gloomily, "and the water's wet in the ditch."

Mr. Grimes placed a large hand on Mollie's waist to support her.

In a wave hounds crushed out through the gorse, gloriously eager, and even as they did, something broke through the waiting crowd and flashed straight down at them.

The something was Hildebrand on Perfection, the bay, quite out of control, with his mouth wide open, and galloping hard.

"Oh, my only aunt, he's going to do it again," said Derick weakly. "Stop him. Catch him. Kill him. Send him home!"

"He has us entirely disgraced," said Patsy gravely to Phillips.

"It's Mr. Hannyside," cried Miss Grimes. "He is coming up in a great hurry. He thinks he is late."

"Pull up," yelled Dermot. "Get away."

"He is not able," boomed Standish, making for safety.

Before there was time for more, the bay had again cut his way through the pack, and come at them. He caught Dermot's mare in the quarters, turning her into the shallow ditch, and sending her rider over her shoulders; he leaped the bank just as Dermot and Miss Grimes rolled together into the far ditch, which was muddy, and Mr. Grimes, who was large and strong, had clasped Mollie to him, and was holding her head against his shoulder that she might not look.

The rest of the crowd had fled, yelling wildly.

"He will be kilt. He has us kilt anyways. Laws! but Mr. Butler is destried, himself an' the lady."

With new pink mud-besmeared, with trails of slimy weed about his hands, Dermot emerged from the wet ditch; one arm was wound about Miss Grimes, who put her hat on again and merely smiled.

"Hunting is exciting. Oh, delightful!" she said, beaming.

There are moments when good-humour may prove trying.

Dermot looked at Miss Knox disentangling herself from the elder's embrace, and he frowned.

Three fields away hounds were racing towards Ballylusky on a breast high scent, a riderless horse close to them.

"I'd say that was ye're mare, Masther Dermot," observed a voice sympathetically.

"Hasn't she the heart in her, the crayther. Sure he'll soon catch her in the car."

Dermot, as they rushed down the hill, was not sure that he would not like to kill Hildebrand.

"He has—greatly—greatly—changed," panted Mr. Grimes from the background.

"Oh, delightfully, delightfully funny," said Susannah.

When the motor hummed on its way, it did not carry Mr. Grimes. He was clinging to the side of the governess-car, as the tubby pony hurled himself along the road at a mad gallop.

"For we must catch them," cried Mollie. "Oh look, there's Dennis Butler, look, jumping there; and there's Nora. Oh, how she rides! And that's the Master, and—that——"

"That was a heap of stones—a high one," remarked the shaken Mr. Grimes. "If you watched the road, Miss Knox."

"Then how," asked Mollie, "could I watch the hunt?"

Mr. Grimes adjusted his glasses and looked up; the spirit of enthusiasm gathered strength. He forgot danger as he too watched.

"No one has apparently any fear," cried Mr. Grimes. "Or they ought not to. . . . Shame! Go on you! Every one else has got over. Oh, fie. Cowardly!" This in loud tones to a distant rider who was wavering at a boggy ditch. "Oh, there they are. Well jumped—well over! I do declare," beamed Mr. Grimes. "I wish I could have hunted. Tally ho! You chou!" chanted the elder of Greater Bethel, growing more excited still. "The fields!

Your place is in the fields!" he called suddenly and sternly to three road riders who clattered up behind them. "Which way are they going? You can see. Follow them!" he declaimed sonorously.

Hounds were swinging up the hill, and bending left and back towards the road. Motors and traps thundered on to get round and meet them, believing they were running to Ballylusky. Mollie spied a narrow boren, and wheeled the excited pony. "We can go up there. We can cut them off!" she shrieked.

The pony dashed over ruts and stones, becoming frantic as the uneven yap-yap of hounds grew plainer. The boren ended at an open gate leading into a flat, long field, and hounds were coming straight across to it.

"We might find a gap in the next fence," said Mollie. "Shall we——"

"I—see the fox," yelled Mr. Grimes; "the fox! He is coming over there. Go on! Go on; gap or no gap!" he declaimed heroically. "Let us see this hunt and its kill."

It was his hand which smote the tubby pony, so that they rushed up the field rocking and bumping.

Now the tale of the hunt was one which some people were never likely to forget. When Hildebrand, with despair in his soul, had scattered Miss Grimes and her father on the top of the hill, he had cursed all hounds and all hunting bitterly, and believed his cup to be full. But the bay horse was not half finished with him. The great, awkward brute fled down the hill with nerve-shattering slips on slabs of rock; then steadied suddenly, and just as Hildebrand was beginning to sit up and hope that Susannah might take it all for fiery zeal and prowess on his part in pursuit of hounds, Perfection suddenly stiffened his neck afresh.

"I will ride up now and explain," panted Hildebrand. "I will say I pulled out of the hunt to do so. And oh, thank Heaven, hounds have disappeared, and I see the road. Stop, you—you brute!" shrieked Hildebrand, as

the bay rushed at a high, narrow bank. "You are not to jump it. I will put knives in your beastly mouth. I will put a saw! Oh——" The rest was lost in the bay's mane.

"If we folly him we should airn a shillin' handy," muttered one Pat Geogohan as Hildebrand passed. "Make on, Mazty Swift, to the wall below; he will surely fall off there."

Perfection had caught sight of vanishing horses, hence his fresh flight. He tore along completely beyond control. He swept like a tornado across the road where Hildebrand had hoped to find sanctuary; he put his wailing rider into different portions of the saddle at each fence. The horrors of many deaths were with Hildebrand as yawning ditches swam muddily beneath him, as hideous cairns of loose stones menaced his onward rush, as green banks were flicked and flung behind. A turn brought them close up to hounds—too close for the Master's comfort; but fortunately the bay was giving out a little, and did no more mischief.

"Begin to be quite sorry, Patsy, that I did not persevere with that horse," said Phillips, spurring his cob along. "Good horse, Patsy."

"Until he be done," said Patsy. "God save us; he but shuck the heels ov him above that bank!"

Hildebrand had learnt to work his hands into the mane, and so cling on over the jumps. He began to feel the bay subsiding, and his own natural arrogance asserted itself. He was leading the chase; the language which one or two real Irishmen had used when he had bumped them was mere nasty jealousy. He was close to the fleeting dogs; and if Susannah could but see him.

"Wire, you fool!" yelled Standish.

"Oh, let him into it; it might catch him," said Knox Harding wildly.

"You might remember that Sandy would be shut up for a week for the funeral," said Standish mildly. "He's over it, anyway."

"Why be frightened at that fence?" gasped Hildebrand pompously over his shoulder to Standish.

Araminta's experience on the grey mare had been of quite another variety. That amicable animal had ambled blandly when other horses galloped, and had lunched blandly off the first bank they met, absolutely declining to jump it. Ambition was not in her. She suffered blows gladly; the spirit of a good martyr appeared to dwell in her grey body. After ten minutes Araminta retired to the road, along which she cantered sulkily, watching the hunt recede. When Mollie turned the pony up the narrow lane she followed her, vainly urging her treasure to make haste.

"I will change her for something else," groaned Araminta bitterly. "I will. Oh, will no one make her go?" she said, for the grey mare, seeing grass, went stubbornly on past the gate and commenced a fresh meal.

Friendly men rushed to the rescue. "'Tis hearses that one sh'ud be pullin'," said Marty, hoping now for the shilling which Hildebrand had disappointed him in. "That's Casey's grey. Hearses; an' she would not even come home cheerful from the grave! There were hearts broke with her before ye to git her, miss."

"She will not proceed," said Araminta.

"If ye sot her abuv on a shlab for a statie an' give her a feed she'd rest there for ever," observed Marty sympathetically. "Laws, terrible hot I am now, miss—terrible!"

Araminta extracted sixpence unwillingly. A hail of blows had urged the grey to her amble, and she lumbered up the field.

Hounds meantime had swung right and then left, driving ahead steadily. Deep going had told upon fat horses; they were labouring now as they breasted the hill. The turn had left Hildebrand a little behind, and the hill brought the bay to complete reason. The hounds swung back again just in front of Hildebrand; Perfection's ears were back and he had reached the stage of wishing to stop. . . . The cub, greatly bustled, had turned sharp out,

side a wired fence; outside sheep foiled the line, and hounds threw up their heads for the first time. Some one hollered ahead beyond the sheep.

They were close to a road. Two or three of the motors had reached it, and Miss Grimes and Dermot came flying across the field, just as the tubby pony, blown but still eager, dashed up at the other side.

"There is a ditch here," said Mollie.

"It is flat," said Mr. Grimes, smacking the pony.

"Oh, papa! delightful," said Susannah. "Oh, look at papa."

She had to hold Dermot's arm as she watched. Mrs. Butler, standing upright in her car, also beheld the amazing spectacle of an elderly, blameless gentleman, taking a shallow trench in a governess-car, with a lurch which sent him down upon his knees and lost him his hat, and of her eldest son and Miss Grimes waltzing with joy on the wired bank.

"Miss Knox!" said Mrs. Butler, "would corrupt any one."

"They are in—they are over. They're upset," shrieked Susannah. "Oh, hurrah! papa, hurrah!" Susannah stopped where she was to watch, and Dermot ran on.

"I had to see it," said Mr. Grimes, "I would see it. Oh, good heavens. Hildebrand Hannyside."

Dermot had a knife with nippers. He wrestled with the barbed wire, and had cleared a gap as the hunt swept up. It was the only possible place for half a mile; the rest of the bank was overgrown with brambles; thick with stakes, and faced by a cleared-out ditch of almost impossible width. Dermot had found the one soft place and waved wildly.

Hildebrand, left behind, began to drive on the now sulky runaway. Young Hannyside had spied Miss Grimes's hat; he wished above all things to be first in the chase. Great thoughts spun in his brain. She should see him thus, ahead of all others, leading this mad and

foolish pursuit of a fox. He cut across the field with the bay shutting up at every stride.

"They're checked," said Dermot loudly to his companion as Hildebrand galloped up to the fence.

"Let me come, *please*," cried a voice strained by repression, from behind.

Hildebrand merely said go on to his horse. He had seen the Master, and was extremely proud of getting to the gap, which Dermot Butler had made just in front of Knox Harding. The Master's horse, in fact, pulled up sharply when his rider saw with astonishment that the plump youth did not mean to wait for him, brushed Perfection's quarters.

"I'm first," said Hildebrand, to the bright-hatted Miss Grimes, and as he cried it misfortune fell.

Perfection's hour of folding up was upon him. He did it accurately, straight across the wide ditch. He laid his head upon the far bank with his pig's eyes blinking evilly, and Mr. Costello wrenched his black's head sharply round.

"For the sorra a ha'porth but fire will lift him now," he said, as he cantered towards home.

Hildebrand, coming slack reined and confidently at the gap in the fence, had fallen into the muddy water. Perfection lay upon one of his legs, and Hildebrand's round face was close to the horse's on the thorny bank.

The horrible part of it was, that instead of the sympathy he expected, a hail of abuse spattered and pattered down on him. Had he not seen hounds check? Why the something—something would he not wait for the Master?

A variety of whips smote Perfection, who merely sank into the mud without making an effort to rise.

Young Mr. Hannyside, clutching brambles, shrieked forth that he would drown.

"You might, the tide is rising," said Standish gloomily. "Oh, rash, intruding fool, farewell," quoted Mr. Blundell equably. "And there isn't a place for us for half a mile."

Looking up, Hildebrand was aware that Miss Susannah Grimes was on the bank above him, and that she was *not* weeping. Looking round with a wrench of eyeballs he saw Mr. Grimes, hatless, standing in a governess-car, and strange, the bitterness of complete failure fell upon Hildebrand more coldly than the slime and water.

People fished at him with whip handles, soothing voices told him he was quite safe if the horse didn't roll, and a variety of country people came hurrying to the rescue.

Derick Knox Harding raged up the bank until Mollie raised her voice from the cart.

"Make a bridge of him," she said. "He's quite quiet. Walk over. Get to the hounds."

"By Jingo," said Derick, jumping off.

From his muddy bed, Hildebrand beheld the Master's boots balancing themselves upon Perfection's side and back, one heel crunched lightly on Hildebrand's arm, and then on the bank; he saw Susannah Grimes, prostrate with unseemly laughter.

"Oh, dee—dee—oh, delightful!" gasped Miss Grimes. "Oh, the fox ran into a hole up there. I saw him do it."

"Is it?" said a deep voice. "His usual failing. Is Mr. Hannyside incapable of being moved? I have come to fetch you, Miss Grimes, from such a scene."

Strong hands were extracting Hildebrand from the mud, which released him with a reluctant "gloop," and soaked, smeared, raging, he climbed the bank. He staggered reproachfully to Susannah.

"You saw me coming up first," he began, "first at the dreadful fence."

"She only saw you in the ditch," said Sandy cruelly. "And they told you hounds had checked. There's an etiquette in hunting, Hildebrand. That's right, boys—that'll do it." Helpers with armfuls of straw were rushing down.

"For 'tisn't tireded, he is but play-actin'," said Patsy "an' 'tisn't his first offence ayther, the dirty trickster."

"My God," stormed Hildebrand, "are you going to sacrifice my horse, my poor exhausted horse?"

He was dazed by his fall. Some wild idea of oblation offered to false gods that a fox might be killed eddied in his muddled brain, and he stood panting, too muddy to hurry to the rescue.

"Are you not even Christians?" roared Hildebrand. "Mr. Grimes. Mr. Grimes—Help!"

"Oh, burn the brute if it lets the hunt go on," said Mr. Grimes callously. "Nasty aquatic animal."

"There now!" cried Marty. "Mind the saddle let ye there, me boys."

Perfection plunged hurriedly to his feet, kicking accurately at Mr. Grimes, who leapt for safety with something which was not a prayer on his lips.

Hounds were clamouring round a hole in the fence; the hunt was over.

"I think Hildebrand was very obliging," said Araminta, who had only caught glimpses of the accident, "to put his horse flat like that for a bridge for Mr. Knox Harding."

When, muddy and wrathful and poorer by several shillings, Hildebrand was getting back to the road, Derick Knox Harding came up beside him. His face wore a restrained expression and his voice made chill efforts towards kindness. He was accompanied by Sandy and a short thin man on a wiry grey.

"You had better," said Derick, "get rid of that brute. You very nearly did real harm with him to-day."

"The water," said Hildebrand tragically, "was almost to my lips."

"You nearly killed Pansy," said Derick absently, "and oh, of course there was yourself too, but here's a man who knows the brute. Here, Mr. Hennessy."

"There was min that could ride tried him lasht year," said Hennessy, "an he besthted thim all. He broke the leg of one, and he was sowlt for a song. They tried

him to race in Point to Points and he led down an' he tireded."

"I should say," said Hildebrand, "he will now take a law action against the man he purchased the beast from."

To which Mr. Hennessy returned "action me aunt" with pointed meaning. "That's what he's lookin' afther," said Hennessy with emphasis. "If ye have no shares in Mc Sweeney's sell that horse quick," said Hennessy, falling back.

"You'd really better, Hildebrand," urged Sandy. "They want a horse for the bus at the Royal Edward. They might chance him and his limper. You really might hurt some one with him."

"Hurt—some one," burst out Hildebrand. "*Some one*. Who?" he questioned, as he reached the road—and saw Miss Grimes, still giggling, jump into the Butler motor.

"Who is McSweeney, that he should influence my selling of this brutal horse?"

"They're the undertakers in Cahervalley," said Sandy mildly.

Hildebrand rode home on Phillips's cob—he was weary of Ireland and of hunting. He gritted his teeth as he looked at the stables behind Castleknock.

"But I dare not go," muttered Hildebrand sullenly, "to leave them to do as they choose."

Mollie Knox was curiously thoughtful at dinner. She smiled vaguely when Sandy told her that she had made a sportsman of Mr. Grimes.

"He's so kind and such a good sort," said Mollie dolefully.

"Why," said Nora, "should these estimable traits make your eyes so heavy, Mollie?"

"Oh well, just because—he is," said Mollie.

CHAPTER XV

O villain, villain, smiling.—*Hamlet.*

But if thou need'st but hunt be ruled by me.

—*Venus and Adonis.*

SUSANNAH GRIMES announced, with an unwonted flow of eloquence, that the only thing she really wanted to do on earth was to hunt.

"Not," said Susannah, waving her hands, "to sit crookedly on a saddle as Miss Mellicombe does, but to ride across those lovely splashy fields, and jump those brambly, delightful fences, and sit straight and square, with a kind of mad glow on your face, as those first people had on theirs, coming up yesterday."

"Knox Harding," observed Dennis, thoughtfully, "was full of glow just then."

Susannah giggled. "That was when Hildebrand Hannyside," she said, "lay in the ditch. In the funny clothes which he must have bought secondhand."

Dermot shuddered, and said it was worse than that. "They were made by a person in the village," said Dermot. "In the village, by a person called Keefe."

"Oh, delightful," said Susannah.

Susannah made up by good humour what she lacked in conversation. She could tramp for miles without growing tired; she never caught cold.

Dermot looked at her now with the questioning expression she seemed to create in his eyes.

"And—I do think Miss Knox is lovely," said Susannah. "If she only had some of that old man's money now."

Dennis Butler grew suddenly interested in the prospect from the windows. Dermot sighed and looked into the glass. Miss Grimes looked exceedingly shrewd, and smiled pleasantly.

"You've known Hannyside for years, haven't you?" asked Dermot.

Susannah's nod was a short one; she smiled to herself.

"He will be very rich," said Dermot.

Miss Grimes nodded again. Then she remarked that riches were wasted on some people, and she said it would soon be time to start.

Dermot was radiant in spotless pink, and there was a meet close by.

"And you, Dennis?" said his stepmother.

Dennis was not going out, he said. Mr. Grimes, fidgeting on the doorstep, said that he was looking forward to a drive with Miss Knox; and Dennis hurried to the yard at something resembling a run.

The tubby pony was starting at a light-hearted gallop from Castleknock when Dennis rode up there, leading a horse beside him, but Miss Brown, in a tight brown hat, was driving him to-day.

Mollie was out on the lawn, disconsolately kicking at yellow leaves. Hildebrand and Araminta had gone in a motor; she would not drive with them.

Her greeting to Dennis Butler was a chill inquiry as to why he wanted two horses to ride at one hunt; followed by the suggestion that she supposed he wished to exercise them thoroughly before he started for England.

When Dennis explained that he was not going to hunt at all, and had come to take Mollie for a gentle ride, she grew colder still in manner, but she had to turn away to hide her face.

Twenty minutes later she was on the back of Dennis's best hunter, cantering across the leaf-strewn lawn.

"I won't hunt," Mollie said, "because if I began I should never stop."

Mollie never hinted that she hoped anything from the unopened letter in Sandy's hands. She stayed to please the little man until it was opened, but she felt sure it was

only full of directions concerning the racehorses, or some fresh torment for Araminta and Hildebrand.

Dennis watched the slender figure; Mollie was a born horsewoman. Then he asked, a little hopelessly, if people could live on debts and an allowance which was always anticipated.

Mollie said No, with some decision. She looked at Dennis critically. "After Christmas," she said; "you go, then, don't you?"

Dennis replied dully that his stepmother said so, and rode closer to Mollie.

"You think then a poor man ought to try to marry an heiress?" he asked.

Mollie said "Certainly," in a voice which would not keep quite steady.

"Think of all the hunters," she said, "and all that, and the pretty hands you admire."

Dennis replied that he often thought of those, and Miss Knox suggested, after a pause, that she had ridden far enough.

"But if you think I ought to," said Dennis, ignoring this, "marry an heiress: I might try here—there's Araminta."

At this suggestion Mollie's gloomy expression relaxed suddenly; she told Dennis that he was a fool, and asked him where he was taking her to.

For they had come across fields and through gates until Droveen was left a long way behind them.

"Hssh!" said Dennis suddenly. "Hssh! All right. Tom, we won't stir."

They had ridden into a little larch wood, a narrow path winding under the cone-fringed branches. Just beyond was a thick patch of gorse, and Mollie saw a spot of pink standing close by a tangled hedge of thorn.

"Hssh!" said Dennis again. "Now look out here."

"The—hunt!" gasped Mollie. "You brought me on purpose."

The Field could be seen through a gap in the hedge. The group of people waiting, some eagerly, with eyes on the covert, some carelessly chattering, with their backs turned, some disguising the hopes they cherished for a blank draw, for the fences round Rockstown wanted doing.

Mollie could see the Master waiting for the first whimper ; Sandy on Blackbird's daughter ; Nora sitting as straight and easily as if the years had forgotten her ; the murmuring of voices rang across the covert.

A stout figure poised upon a bank wore a disconsolate air of search as it walked along.

"It's Mr. Grimes," said Mollie. "I said I would be out in the trap. If he only wasn't so kind and nice."

"They've found!" hissed Tom, the second whip. "Don't you move, Mr. Dennis."

Rollicker threw the long note which tells the tale of fox ; the gorse crackled as the pack crashed to him. Dragon and Sunlight confirmed it ; the gorse echoed to a burst of music.

Dogs barking on the trail, no more, yet is there anything quite like it on earth ? All round the quiet country, the good hunter beneath us shivering with excitement, and that crash of musical tongues stirring our hearts so curiously. All over it the sense of anticipation and uncertainty, the fears of a bad start, the hopes of a gallop. The tense strain, with reins taken up, with hat crammed down, with memories of past runs rioting in our minds. Close to us now a startled blackbird flies up, marking where our fox has passed. Dan's cap up ! He has viewed him.

They ran fourteen miles from Rockstown once, straight away to Garrysheen, that distant hill, where a stout fox saved his life in the untopped wood. The best country in all Cahervalley lies round ; sound, big banks, where fifty horses could jump abreast ; grass land which is holding in wet weather.

"There he is," breathed Dennis. "Don't speak ! Don't ! We'll be in hot water !"

A big old fox loped up on to the overgrown fence round the cover, pausing, then listening to the crash of tongues behind him. Then, quite quietly, he hopped down into the larch wood, slipping off at the fox gallop, which distances the fastest hound for a time.

Mollie opened her mouth to shriek, and closed it to think of biting speech, as Dennis suddenly clapped his hand on it.

"Grr! Grr! You—" gurgled Mollie, behind the gay dogskin glove. "Grr! How dare——"

Tom's shrill shriek rent the air. The sudden thudding of hoofs rose in almost instant answer; the field had some distance to gallop round.

"Forrard! Away, away, away!" The clear jubilation of it, shrilling out among the fringe of branches, echoing to the ears of the old fox who had hoped he had slipped off unseen.

"Quiet," said Dennis again. "We can't hurt him. Don't you utter, Mollie."

Jumble of yap and yowl closer and closer to them. A lean, wistful head raised suddenly over the stony fence; another and another. Crackle of parting gorse bushes, light rolling of stones as the dog pack burst out, a great mass of white and tan and black, for a minute blotting out the dark fence, then out into the wood. A second's pause and Ransom has it, then Sunlight, and away with a swiftness which tells of a holding scent.

"Now, out of the wood, carefully!" said Dennis. "Mollie, we've got a start this time."

Mollie forgot to say she would not hunt, and that her name was Knox. The large boughs whipped and slashed at them as they clattered down the narrow path. A big boundary fence, bramble grown, rotten, faced the wood.

"Oogh!" said Tom, placidly, as he put his chestnut at it.

"We shall fall in," observed Mollie, with some firmness. "but, oh, come on, and get out again."

Dennis's brown faced the fence with the ardour of youth. Taking off too soon, he landed with a scramble, and shot out across the far ditch with another. But Mollie knew the perfectly timed jump of a perfect hunter.

With his hocks well under him, Gameboy gathered himself together, sprang cleanly across the wide trench, paused to look down, and swung out again, feet beyond the gleam of muddy water so far beneath.

Mollie shrieked in her excitement. Hounds were racing up the field, running almost silently now.

"We could have gone round," said Dennis, "to a gate, but we're over now, and if they don't check, we're in luck," he added, pulling away to the left of the pack.

Mollie rode in Dennis's tracks with sublime trust. Sometimes she thought the joy of it all was so keen it almost hurt; the wind sweeping in her face; Gameboy's easy, lengthy stride; his perfect fencing. The slight quickening of his pace as he swung into a field; his almost imperceptible pause; his light, accurate springs on and off; his long fly across a wall; his buck over timber.

Beside them, hounds, driving steadily without the semblance of a check, until sheep circling on sour, marshy ground brought them for a moment to their noses.

Then, looking back, the three lucky people could see the bobbing hats, and pink and black coats of the field which had missed the start.

Two or three almost caught them at the check, but before they could come up hounds were flying on, pouring over the great banks, throwing their tongues as they started again, racing grimly for blood.

The bitterness of the chase, which has for its guide the top hats of the lucky leaders, was forced upon good men to-day. That horror of endless galloping, of watching those few people whom we positively hate, rise and fall and disappear at the fences; the hope of a turn, the prayers for a check, and *then* see if we'll be left again. The sudden, wrathful pulling out, determined to try to cut

off a corner ; the bitter recognizing of its complete disaster ; the pound-pound of horses behind us ; the slovenly jumping under us of a horse who is perfect when he can see hounds, but resents this aimless pursuit.

It is the nightmare of hunting, yet we hold on because the check may come ; the turn may be taken, and we shall gallop on to them to be greeted by the smiling faces of the few whom luck has adopted for the day.

No use trying to look as if you'd dropped in from right or left ; they are too kindly-hearted and sympathetic to permit that.

"Pity you missed that, old chap. Best thing we've had this year. By Jove! it was a snorter! Bad start at the road, I suppose. They'll go on? Oh, of course, but it's practically over now. There's Droveen just in front, if he ever gets there."

In the biting wrath which eats us up we have space for wrath more bitter still, directed against those who ride the tail chase, one upon each other's heels, in happy contentment ; who lollop up when the fox is dead or to ground, and who beam at you until the desire for murder is born.

"Wasn't that a lovely hunt? How well your horse went. I was close behind you for a long time."

The sarcasm of the flung out: "Never saw a hound from start to finish," is completely wasted. There are fortunate people who do not ride to see hounds. And then with bitterness dying we remember that Redshanks, best of horses, awaits us at Ballinasloe, and swear that barbed wire itself shall not lose us another start.

As Mollie, Dennis, and Tom galloped on easily, the Cahervalley hunt rode one of these nightmare-like chases behind them.

"How did they get away? Who are they?" was flung out wrathfully.

"It looks like Dennis Butler."

Knox Harding, on a thoroughbred, got up to them first, and grinned as he saw Dennis.

A line of gaps led across some big holding fields, then the ground fell sharply to a flooded river, swirling brown and wrathful between its banks.

Countrymen cheered them on ; their fox, dead tired, was close in front.

"The tail dhroopin on him," shrieked an encouraging voice. "An' he thrailin' the legs with the dинth of tire."

Tom viewed him suddenly, just across the river, scrambling dejectedly along a bank. Hounds flung into the muddy, swirling current, and Dennis hovered on the edge, but the other side was steep and honey-combed, with a glisten of wire across the only possible landing-place.

Dennis turned and galloped back ; he knew there was a ford higher up.

Men on blown horses struggling up, pulled up gladly. It was all over. Tom had viewed him dead-beat, just across the river.

Dennis pounded for the ford ; beaten foxes have a way of travelling on. He plunged on to a road, Mollie on his heels, to see hounds streaming across the next field.

"It is a new one," shrieked a farmer from a trap. "He is off like a motor-car. I seen him cross out."

"And we still have it to ourselves," grinned Dennis, with the selfish joy of a fox hunter.

Not quite ! Tom had plunged somehow across the river, and was with them still. The Master was close up. They ran for four miles across a perfect country, lighter going than in the beginning, and smaller fencing.

The black five-year-old had proved himself a treasure ; he had not put a foot astray ; he was galloping on with his long even stride, lathered a little, but going as freely as when he had left Rockstown.

There was pride in Mollie's heart coupled with her joy ; pride for the man in front going so fearlessly, finding the best places as if by instinct, but taking them all without a

thought of fear. And always with a slight turn of his head as she landed, a look to see if she was safe.

He was taking care of her. Mollie was tasting the keenest happiness she had ever known; and its twin sister pain must gallop by its side.

A humping tangle of green hills rose in front, scarred by jutting crags; with a dark mass of trees spreading to them.

"Castle Ievers," said Dennis. "We'll lose him here. It's open."

Five minutes later they pulled up on the lawn, watching hounds shrieking out their disappointment round an un-stopped hole.

"Two foxes," said Knox Harding, "and the best gallop we've had this year. Dennis, I'll buy your black horse."

"Not just yet," said Dennis quietly. "I may want him."

The keen glow of the perfect gallop faded to a sadder sense of weariness. Even with its memory tingling in every nerve, it was human nature not to be satisfied.

Dennis Butler must marry money; the chance was his.

Mollie wanted the right to ride again, not once, but many times; to follow her pilot over the best country in the world; to know that she could hunt as she liked. And more, when the day was over. She looked up at Dennis, tears smarting in her eyes. She was no one—a poor little dependent on the bounty of the Mellicombe cousins; a girl who must toil for the right to live.

"Well," said Dennis cheerily, riding up to her, "how did you like it?"

"It was the most perfect thing I have ever known, and I wish I had never come out," said Mollie.

Dennis stroked his chin softly, feeling that feminine logic was beyond him.

"Now for squalls," he said nervously.

For his stepmother, with displeasure stamped upon her

plump face, was hurrying down across the lawn. Having lost the hounds, she had driven on to lunch with her friend Mrs. Ievers, who was staying with her son, and, hearing hounds, they had come out.

Before this, over an excellent luncheon, Mrs. Butler had aired severe views concerning Mollie.

"An improvident little person, who does not know her position in life," she snorted. "Actually endeavoured to attract my Dermot, my dear. But, of course, he saw through her."

Miss Grimes took a second cutlet, but did not eat it.

Mr. Grimes had gone off with Miss Brown in the pony trap. He had not looked happy all day.

"Of course old Mr. Hannyside FOUND OUT something," said Mrs. Butler emphatically, "and left the girl nothing."

"But if," said Susannah, who had talked to Mr. Allenbury, and knew something of the will, "but if——" then she began to eat her cutlet hurriedly.

"If what, Miss Grimes?" inquired her hostess.

"Oh nothing," said Susannah, "nothing at all. The hounds! Oh, delightful!" she screamed, and hurled herself at the fastenings of the French windows.

Mrs. Ievers inquired if there was money there, as Miss Grimes rushed down the terrace, and Mrs. Butler replied tartly that it was a mere passing friendship, and not to be considered—the girl was to marry Hildebrand.

"It is the hounds," she added. They were coming, fleeting over the green of the park close to the fox.

"And only four people near them," cried Mrs. Ievers. "See, they are jumping in. One of them is Dennis—I know his seat."

"And one——" Mrs. Butler bustled down the avenue, "one—oh, good heavens! one is that insufferable Miss Knox, daring to come out hunting!"

She bustled down towards the hounds. Mollie, spying Mrs. Butler, brightened mischievously. She listened to

the sonorous call of "Miss Knox," twice, before she answered.

"Miss Knox," said Mrs. Butler, "I am surprised to observe you upon my son's horse—I am surprised."

"So was I," said Mollie meekly; "we met the hounds—by chance. And, oh, it was glorious!"

Mrs. Butler said acidly that the cultivation of a taste which one had no right to enjoy, was the most foolish thing on earth.

The lawn was full of people now. People who had ridden a hard tail hunt and people who had soberly shortcutted or hammered roads, all seemed to arrive together.

Dennis was discreetly vague as to his start. He looked warningly at Tom, and said he had just happened to get away. No; he hadn't gone round the wood.

"Because you were waiting in it," observed Standish in thunderous undertone. "If you were caught, Dennis, it would serve you right."

"Only we weren't," said Dennis gently, "not for eight miles."

Standish grunted.

Miss Grimes, spying Hildebrand, who was arrayed in mourning hues, tempered by white spats and lemon gloves, greeted him with a giggle, and said she saw that he had given up hunting.

"No wonder, on that thing with the open mouth," said Susannah sympathetically. "He just wagged you everywhere all over his body. You don't really like it, either, do you?" she added. "One doesn't when one can't manage things. I know, because a donkey kicked me off once."

Hildebrand, having answered loftily that he had not given up hunting, stood sulkily aside. He felt determined to show Susannah before she left that he could ride, and look well on a horse, even if he had to hire one.

As he leant against the palings watching the people

go up to be fed and otherwise refreshed, a genial voice aroused him.

"That was a terrible time you had out on Monday," it said. "By gum! but you were a wonder to stick it."

Hildebrand looked up to see Mr. Fitzzy Gehogan smiling down at him. Fitzzy was a large youth with somewhat bloodshot eyes, an impressive brogue, and an expansive smile. His hunting outfit made up in cut what it lacked in expense. No one else's breeches were so tight at the knees; no one else's coat so long in the tails. Mr. Gehogan smoked Hollybush cigarettes, and generally managed to lunch at several motor-cars. He was so obliging about luncheon time as to holding any one's horse, or helping to bring up the second mounts, or coming down to tell people what the next draw would be.

Unkind people in the county called him Spongy Gehogan.

Hildebrand, knowing nothing of these peculiarities, laid the flattering salve to his smarting self-esteem, and replied that his horse had been very restive indeed on Monday.

Fitzzy returned: "Restive, is it?" with a positive groan. "The biggest thief in all Ireland," he said, "and to stick him into a stranger was a disgrace. If 'twas one that was no horseman now, Hannyside, where was he on him?"

One of Fitzzy's characteristics was a constant use of people's names, used with a friendly emphasis.

"Where *was* he?" said Fitzzy. "That's the way with a rotten little dealer felly; he doesn't care. If you buy from a gentleman, he has his reputation to think of, Hannyside. I declare to goodness I was never sorrier. A great sportsman like yourself, that we should be proud to have here, run away with."

Hildebrand felt that Fitzzy Gehogan's smile was a thing of warmth. He was really appreciated at last.

"Some of us should try to make it up to you. I declare we should," declaimed Fitzzy. "Yes, they're moving off; but my horse is tired. He carried me grand that hunt."

Now, I tell you, Hannyside, if I could help, if I could do a swop now and get rid of that runaway brute for you, I'd be gladly at a loss to oblige a good fellow. Come over to the Castle," said Fitzy lightly; "come to-morrow, and eat a bit of lunch. The girls will be delighted."

Hildebrand got into the motor-car with a smile. He was driven back to take tea at the Butlers', where he spoke quite seriously to Susannah about hunting, and told her that he was lunching with friends next day, and about to buy another horse to hunt on.

Susannah murmured, "Oh, delightful!" absently.

Hildebrand asked Phillips for his cob next day, and he inquired his route from Sandy.

"Ballinrobe Castle," said Sandy, directing him. "What's taking you over there, Hildebrand?"

Hildebrand looked sphinx-like.

"They are half-sir kind of people," said Nora carelessly. "And Fitzy has a ready tongue. He's going to buy a horse," she added, as Hildebrand rode away.

"If he's going to buy a horse from Fitzy, he'll match him," said Sandy, grinning. "Get him vetted!" he yelled. "If it's a horse, get him vetted, Hildebrand, and have a trial!"

"Let him alone," said Nora unkindly. "He won't let us help him. Fitzy will flatter him into anything."

"What, I wonder, is a half-sir," considered Hildebrand as he rode on.

Hildebrand thought later that Ballinrobe Castle looked rather dilapidated. It was merely an everyday Irish home, tall and inornate, with high steps leading up to the hall door, and kitchen windows blinking up from cavernous depths.

Hildebrand was greeted by Fitzy, who was watching for him, and led into a large room full of miscellaneous furniture, where a window might have been opened some months before. A tinge of stale dust and cigarette smoke clung to the used-up air. Miss Violet Gehogan, who was

going to be married, was looking at a book of patterns in the window, and Miss Ellie, who was buxom and pleasant-looking, was playing the piano loudly.

"Knock a few of those boxes off the sofa, Ellie, and give this man a corner," said Fitzy. "Nothing but parcels, Hannyside, and patterns, I declare, now. You've met my sisters, haven't you?"

Ellie, shaking her curly head, hoped to goodness there'd be a bit to eat, for they'd only that minute heard there was a guest. She had been preparing luncheon all the morning.

But, in company with her brother, she applied flattery heavily but dexterously to Hildebrand's willing mind. She asked him about his great place in England, and listened breathlessly to description. When there was a pause, she pointed out a coat-of-arms hung on the wall, and supposed that Hildebrand knew they were cousins of the Ballinrobes. "Fitzrobe is the family name," she said, "and there's a Lady Violet now."

Ellie grew absent when Hildebrand branched off to Greater Bethel; but even then she was deferential.

They sat long over a heavy meal of four varieties of meats and three sweets, none of which quite arrived at what they endeavoured to be. This, topped up by nuts and oranges, stretched well into the afternoon, so that the light was dim before they went to the stables.

The straggling yards were filled with a heterogeneous equine collection. Fitzy had a "bottle" for almost every complaint on earth. He could boil down a doubtful tendon, reduce curbs, cure broken knees, doctor "whistlers" as cleverly as any small dealer. But Fitzy went in for honesty, on the surface.

"You can see the taste of a curb he has. I only bought him a month ago, and I don't think anything of it myself." This after three months' assiduous work with the enlargement. "Er—well—well, she is just a little thick there; see it for yourself. I wouldn't say it's worth putting a bandage on her even—it's so slight; but I must point it out."

No one could say afterwards that Fitzzy had deceived them ; but they could not know either how many hours had been spent before the tendon reached the stage of only being slightly thickened. When, after a day or two's hard work without lotions and poultices, it bowed ominously, no one was so distressed as the late owner.

He showed Hildebrand several hunters of varying merit ; he paused before one cocktailed black as if he wondered, but he went on after a minute, remarking that he wasn't quite the class for a great rider.

" But here," said Fitzzy, opening a door, " pull off his rugs, Marty."

Miss Ellie, with a little rush and squeal, said she'd do it herself.

" Me an' Top Hole being great friends," she said, coquettishly, " the greatest darling, Mr. Hannyside, and you couldn't knock him."

Top Hole, a big bay, was certainly good-looking. He was a level, compact horse, with a lean, sensible head, perfectly set on ; with great sloping shoulders, and deep through the heart.

" There's quality," said Fitzzy, " there's one won't pull and won't fall, and I tell you, Hannyside, there he is, Top Hole by Sheldrake, out of a three-quarter-bred mare ; and he's the best horse in Ireland."

An engaging arm, clad in green tweed, was slipped through Hildebrand's.

" I'd like to do you a turn, Hannyside," said Fitzzy, " after the dirty way you were treated. It's an honour to me, so it is. Look here, now, I'll take that runaway as a swop, with a bit of boot. If I lose on it I'll pick it up elsewhere. Give me fifty and the horse, and between friends, it's done. There isn't another, I tell you," said Fitzzy, "'d ask you that price for Top Hole."

Fifty pounds was a vast sum of gold. Yet the thought of Monday before Susannah's eyes outweighed it. Experience and Sandy's parting shout induced caution. Hilde-

brand looked at the handsome bay and said he might do it, but he must have a trial and a vet's opinion.

"Oh, then, a dozen vets," said Fitzzy heartily. "An' more satisfactory between pals. But for a trial now," Mr. Gehogan looked dubious. "You see the way of it is, Miss Graves is about him, and was to have Monday's ride; if she saw another up, I might leave the country with what she'd say about me. But——" a heaven-sent idea appeared to flash before Fitzzy's mental eyes; he clapped Hildebrand on the shoulder and made it palpable.

The local harriers met next day. He would send a messenger for Mr. Hannyside's clothes, or indeed, did he want anything? Let him stay the night and ride Top Hole next day.

"I couldn't offer fairer," said Fitzzy genially, "and you couldn't be painin' me be sayin' no."

Hildebrand admired the sedateness aired by Top Hole in his jog down the yard. He hesitated, and accepted.

A long dinner, followed by music and giggle, made young Hannyside positively radiant. These were the people he could get on with. Cheery, affable, well-connected, the expression "half-sir" had doubtless something to do with the baronet ancestor. Hildebrand forgot himself so far as to squeeze Ellie's waist during a romping round game.

Fitzzy, flushed from whisky-and-soda, followed by a red liquid called port, beamed happily on Hildebrand. Through genial deference he grew loving. He swore that he knew a good fellow at sight, and that pals were scarce.

Tulla races took place on Saturday. They were going. Why should not Hannyside come too? Stay on again and make a day of it with them?

"We'll get a motor," said Fitzzy. "It wouldn't do for a felly like you to drive out on a hired car. We'll get a motor from McSweeney's."

Hildebrand murmured that he had believed McSweeney to be the undertakers.

"They keep motors too, to help them on," observed Violet's fiancé, who was noted for a sombre wit.

It was settled promptly. They would drive in early and procure a car. They would lunch on the course, and come home full of money.

"Myself an' the girls an' Joey would have gone on the train and driven out to the course," said Fitzy, "but it's different with you, Hannyside. And Magee will examine your horse that same day, so that you'll have him against Monday's meet."

Hildebrand felt that this was the world to live in. He, as the owner of the Northlap stud, was a person apart. He must travel in motor-cars taken for him by admiring friends.

Young Hannyside, sunflower-wise, turned his face to the glow of adulation. He explained, during dinner, as he drank indifferent soda water, that he was free as air should he choose to drink, no temperance oath binding him. And afterwards, in an atmosphere thick with tobacco smoke, he actually accepted a glass of sloe gin from Miss Ellie, who whispered coaxingly that 'twas for all the world like their gran'ma's, so old it had forgotten the mischief that was in it.

Miss Violet was not eloquent. In fact, the only remark she made to her guest during dinner was whether he'd fancy rosy-pink or puce velveteen to travel in, and after that she became immersed in thought.

"Kindly, charming," murmured Hildebrand, as he endeavoured to sleep upon a feather bed, to dream that Top Hole was carrying him through the middle of the pack, and in some mysterious manner dragging the hounds down into a smothering mud-hole, in the midst of which he awoke and succeeded in opening a window.

A mighty breakfast came in relays from the kitchen; chops and cold beef, a hot ham, some four pounds of bacon and two dozen eggs being brought up sometimes by a harassed-looking maid, and sometimes by men who

knocked coyly at the door to announce behind its shelter, "The ham, Miss Ellie. The eggs," and then thrust a dish into the room.

Hildebrand was driven to the meet. His desire to ride there being put aside as quite impossible for one in his position of life. He joined a throng of men on young horses, out to school them in pursuit of a pack of hounds of varied sizes and breeds and tongues. The long yowl of the harrier, the deerhound's great bay, and the stirring fox-hound note could be heard as they opened cheerfully on a terrified goat.

Fitzy was whip. After he had conferred earnestly with the Master, they moved off; and Hildebrand found Top Hole a charming mount. He was a little rough when he jogged, but they only once got on to a road, and his manners were perfect. He achieved his fences with great care and precision; propping carefully as he took off, lowering himself cleverly to land—methods which delighted Hildebrand. The horse galloped a little stiffly, the result, Fitzy explained, of want of work.

The conversation between Henry Hennessy, the Master, and Fitzy, might have given Hildebrand cause for thought, but he did not hear it. It finished up with: "Ye'd sell china eggs for hatchin', Fitzy," and a smack of the whip on the Master's boot.

Hildebrand circled in the pursuit of a fleeing hare wrapped in delightful reverie. Miss Ellie had just told him the horse matched him to pieces. Even in Danny Keefe's failure, he felt that he would now show Susannah how he could ride.

Fitzy began to fear the rain about half-past two. He said there were buckets of it in the sky, and he hustled Hildebrand off Top Hole, and into the waiting dog-cart.

"Walk him home, Cadogan," he whispered to his groom, "and get the hose on the minnit you see the tap."

Top Hole only awaited his certificate of soundness. Hildebrand willingly stayed again at Castle Ballinrobe

though he politely asked for the removal of the feather-bed.

"It is terrible forgetful I am," said Ellie repentantly ; "that was put on the bed for Aunt Mary, the time she died here, an' I forgot to put it out. She had a wish for the feathers."

The next November morning was softly grey ; no bite of cold in the wind ; and they set forth for Cahervalley, packed upon an outside car, with Fitzzy perched upon the box, endeavouring to keep a lumpy grey from running into the carts on the road.

"It's all very well when they are to the left," said Fitzzy, optimistically, "but if you see a motor on the right it might be as well to have the rug thrown off ready to jump."

Fortune and a severe whip bringing them to the town, they pounded up the muddy street to the garage owned by Mr. McSweeney.

The proprietor, summoned from next door, where he attended to hearses, stroked his face dubiously and looked at Fitzzy without enthusiasm. "Their best car was out, and there was only the old one, with Sam at it now."

A whispered conversation with Fitzzy appeared to change Mr. McSweeney's views ; he relaxed visibly, roared orders to the invisible Sam to bring out the old car on the minnit, and to drive her himself. "I'll make him," he added, as a boom of remonstrance arose.

Mr. McSweeney then vanished, and a disreputable grey motor, soured by the injustices of hiring out, threshed and thrummed out backwards, driven by a gloomy-looking youth in exceedingly dirty clothes.

"Not even a second to make meself dacent," he said sulkily, "an' I at her all the mornin'. She might get there, though," he added, more hopefully, seeing Hildebrand.

As they left, Hildebrand overheard a last important murmur from Fitzzy.

"Mr. Hannyside of Northlap Priory. Owner of the race horses"; and Hildebrand smiled consequentially.

Fitzy went in front with the driver. Hildebrand was packed between the two buxom Miss Gehogans, and the fiancé, whose name was Joey, absorbed mud upon the step.

The old car rattled and roared upon her over-laden way, toiling up the hills on her third as though something must give way, threshing on the level, rocking down hill.

Sam bored his way through the crowd very much as if he were a battleship facing the enemy. He explained placidly that if "he didn't keep a bit of way on her they'd never get there at all," and he finally landed them into the narrow streets of Tulla in excellent time.

Here Fitzy said he must delay to cash a cheque, but a search in his pockets appeared to confuse him greatly.

"Left behind," said Fitzy tragically. "There now! isn't it like me?"

Joey, on the step, whistled, "Then you wink the other eye," softly.

With a winning smile, Fitzy asked Hildebrand to lend him money. "Having your cheque-book on you," said Fitzy, "and this is your bank. I'll let you have it to-night. Make it out for five—or say ten. I wouldn't like to be stinting you all."

Hildebrand, somewhat bewildered, was led into the bank, where a trusting banker honoured his cheque. It was only as they went outside, and Fitzy pocketed the gold, that Hildebrand paused.

"I could have given you one of my cheques to write on," he said, showing symptoms of returning. "You could have altered the name of the bank."

"Well now, aren't we stupid," said Fitzy, getting on the car. "We're late now, already, so hurry on."

The car, gathering way with a groan, landed them at length by a bleak erection of wood, uncovered to the mercy of the day. Hildebrand gave forth five shillings for their

car, Fitzzy having no change, and they came full of cheer into an ankle-deep paddock.

Tulla races are of some importance. Mingled odours of beer and porter and whisky marked the door of a refreshment-room to which they hurried gaily. Here hunger was appeased on slabs of American beef, potatoes, cabbage, apple-pie, and cheese—but champagne of no known brand fizzed and gurgled into thick glasses, until Fitzzy's red cheeks deepened by two shades, and the Miss Gehogans giggled more freely than ever. Miss Ellie informed Hildebrand sweetly that he was a trump, for she loved the "boy," but notwithstanding it all Hildebrand was beginning to feel dubious as to his enjoyment. His cold beef had been accompanied by soda water : he eyed the pink-hued champagne almost regretfully. The first race was over as they finished lunch, and the numbers up for the second.

Miss Ellie, clinging to his side, picked out a bay mare called Daisybell, and asked Hildebrand to put a pound on it for her. She watched him do it, produce it reluctantly.

Daisybell finishing a good fourth, Ellie remarked that she would have it out with Corny O'Brien, and again walked Hildebrand forth among the crowd. He recognized some of the people he knew, who nodded to him with somewhat curious smiles. For the third race Ellie returned from excited whispering with a crafty-looking youth, to request that another pound should be put upon Santy. It seemed impossible to refuse, and with a groan Hildebrand obeyed. When Santy won easily, Ellie took the ticket and collected the money herself.

"That's five pounds," she said, with complete oblivion of the hand held forth for the original stake. "My, but we're in luck, Mr. Hannyside, to-day. Now for the next race."

"I have no more money, I fear," said Hildebrand frigidly, his hand still outstretched.

To which Miss Ellie returned that she had enough to go on with now, and that they'd look again for Corny O'Brien.

"There isn't a ramp in Ireland that boy isn't in," said Ellie cheerily.

The outing began to assume the shape of a nightmare. Rain drizzled down. Ellie required constant safeguards against the chill she might be catching, and she preferred champagne to drink; there was always some one she could share with. When the fourth race was run and Sam announced to them that he had no lamp that would last more than an hour and no carbide with him, Fitz's complexion was plum-colour; Joey, the fiancé, said he was going back by train because he would not trust himself to sit on the step, and the two girls were hilariously mischievous.

Hildebrand had to endure a bear fight in the dripping carriage enclosure, and also the presence of Mr. Corny O'Brien on his knee, that youth demanding a lift home.

The rain thickened to a blighting mist; the old car groaned and grated through the mud. Through it all the two Miss Gehogans and Mr. O'Brien sang rollicking songs with chorus principally consisting of "Have done now—Corny," then a pleased squeal. "What will Mr. Hannyside think of your manners? I declare now, Vi'let—isn't Corny awful?"

Meantime Fitzy nodded on the driving-seat, seriously inconveniencing the patient Sammy.

They crawled, now lightless, nearly into Cahervalley. The car groaned and gave out at the bridge going into the town, and fate sent that as Sam laboured to re-start it the gleaming headlights of the Butlers' car should dig its bedraggled, helpless sister out of the dusk which hid her; and Dermot Butler, who was driving, slowed down to proffer help.

Hildebrand, crushed into a corner, saw Susannah Grimes's face peering at him behind the dazzling lights. Miss Ellie's dripping hat almost rested on his shoulder; Mr. O'Brien, whose spirits were untirable, had taken the opportunity to warm himself from a stout plated flask.

Fitzzy nodded aimlessly across the steering-wheel, cooing softly to it, and turning it about mildly, as he told it that it was hard in the mouth.

"Drive on, Dermot!" commanded Mrs. Butler. "We'll send out a card. Hildebrand Hannyside, with those dreadful people."

"I've never seen any one so changed," said Mr. Grimes sadly.

When Hildebrand, disgusted with the world, left the Castle next morning, he was astonished by the warm thanks poured upon him for the trip. His mild demand for his money was met sweetly by Fitzzy, who came down as fresh as if race-course champagne had never existed. Top Hole's certificate of soundness lay on the breakfast table, and Hildebrand had to write another cheque.

Hildebrand looked at the word "aged" and said he had not understood the horse was past mark of mouth. To which Fitz answered absently that there was never a hunter worth riding till he was seven or eight, and Hildebrand felt satisfied.

On the doorstep of your host's house it is difficult to hint at debt. Hildebrand left without his ten pounds.

The arrival of Top Hole and departure of Perfection marked the day of his return. He was somewhat astonished to see Nora patting the bay lovingly.

"He'll do you splendidly, Hildebrand," she said, "if he gets through the season. Oh, the old dear—the old treasure! Fancy his coming here again."

Hildebrand said sulkily that the horse was sound.

"Oh, he always was," said Nora, "the darling. He was Standish's ten years ago, and there never was such a hunter. I often rode him. I had him for two months."

Standish Blundell and Sandy both came up to see the new horse, and stood looking at him with such reserved expressions that Hildebrand grew irritable.

"May I ask what is wrong with this animal?" he said loudly.

"There never was anything, except his legs," said Standish, "and I thought they'd go ten years ago when I sold him."

"But, how old is he?" gasped Hildebrand.

"He'll be—twenty-three—no, twenty-four in May," said Standish. "And even if he can't gallop he'll never fall. I suppose, now, Fitzzy made you pay a fiver with the bay for the old boy. I never thought you had so much sense before as to buy this horse."

Hildebrand walked back to the house, and felt he hated Fitzzy.

A chill request for his lent ten pounds was received pleasantly by Fitzzy, who declared he thought that was their goin' up for the day, and hadn't it on him now.

In four weeks' time, when Hildebrand had recognized the fact that the trip to Tulla was so much money laid out, he opened a letter one morning and perused it with a very bitter expression.

"Hildebrand, have you been hiring motors?" said Miss Mellicombe, looking at the bill.

"To hire of car to Tulla, five pounds. Chauffeur's expenses, ten shillings."

"It would appear so," said Hildebrand, breathing heavily.

CHAPTER XVI

Holy men . . . have good inspirations.

—*Merchant of Venice.*

WITH swiftly passing sunshiny days, November, soft and warm, slipped to the chilliness of December, its dull skies and darkened afternoons; when half-past three rang the knoll of falling dimness, and horses, save for the heavy ground, did their lightest work for the year.

Hildebrand, when he had recovered from the shock of buying a veteran of over twenty, found Pop Hole, as Hannan remarked, his fair match.

The old horse, when he had shaken his head and enjoyed the regret of his beloved hounds, was as glad to come home as his fat owner.

Hildebrand's first ride on his new purchase was marred by the kindly criticism of Miss Grimes, who said, "What a nice kind old horse. You will be quite able to manage *him*," and then asked why Mr. Hannyside had not bought a red coat to hunt in.

"Respect for my dear uncle's memory," said Hildebrand stiffly, "for his loss."

"Oh, of course, delightful," said Miss Grimes absently, "respect, you know."

Susannah's visit came to an end; she left with Hildebrand advanced no further in his suit, and Mollie was again warmly invited to Lesser Cheriton.

"There is no hunting," said Mr. Grimes, "but a horse could be found with a neighbouring pack. I quite approve of the sport."

His kindly words made Mollie's answer unduly gruff, because her voice would shake a little.

Perhaps after the winter she would come to the sheltered residence of the Greater Bethelite. Perhaps.

Then winter passed a little drearily at Droveen. Araminta showed no thought of going away. She made daily visits to the racehorses, and talked with confidence of the National.

"You will instruct the jockey, Mr. Watson, to make his winning safe," Araminta would say. "Not to delay in any way. I think, in fact, I shall go to instruct him myself."

"Let me catch you saying one word," Hildebrand would retort amiably, "just one word, Araminta."

Hildebrand went back to England once and returned depressed. He said that Miss Grimes's religious balance had been upset. Her father had bought her a horse, and she rode it out when she ought to have been making flannel shirts for the black Caribbee savages.

"Even Mr. Grimes," said Hildebrand indignantly, "is different. When I hinted at Susannah's lack of zeal, he said that the savages were doubtless hot enough without flannels, and that one shirt less wouldn't hurt them. He reads *The Field*," grumbled Hildebrand stormily, "and he used sporting expressions in his discourses. 'Stopped by a bank which needed doing,' and 'hot on the scent of sin' were two which I noticed with deep pain."

Hildebrand hated hunting with his whole indolent being. He drew forth his field money with visible reluctance; he detested the cold whip of rain which makes the fire so doubly blissful when one comes in; he detested the flurry getting away, the necessity of taking jumps to keep in a run. Araminta, having exchanged her grey for a tall brown horse with bad fore legs, and a distaste for its oats, rather liked it in a mild way.

She spoke regretfully of the sacrifice she would make when she settled down in London.

"One that Arthur will realize," she said firmly.

Sandy remarked that he felt quite sure Mr. Eustace would not be allowed to overlook it.

Mollie's youth had beaten back resolution. She gave up sacrificing the present on the altar of the future, and she came out hunting.

Dennis's valuable black seemed to be a curiously idle animal, always wanting some one to ride him that winter. Mollie spent joyous hours on his powerful back, learning, as she gained experience, pleasure of finding her own way, of watching hounds closely. Learnt, too, that all hunting is not the glory of a gallop, and that a slow hunt may be enjoyed for the perfection of its hounds' work.

Araminta was always inclined to think hounds a nuisance; they got in her way on the heather-grown hills, which she loved going to. She might often ride there all day without jumping a fence. Also, her new horse, Brown King, kicked at them, and Mr. Knox Harding had been quite unpleasant about it.

"Sandy," said Nora one morning, as they strolled up to the stables, "Sandy, two little girls in blue and finnan haddocks on Fridays have failed. And I could not endure them for another year, Sandy."

Sandy said that personally he would not have endured them for a month.

"It's that fishing-place," said Nora sadly. "I do want it so badly."

"I," said Sandy, "want the permanent absence of Hildebrand and Araminta. They harangued Watson for ten minutes to-day as to his wasted straw. Hildebrand said he would have it shaken over and taken down for his horse, and I could allow for it in the bill."

"Listen!" said Nora.

"I declare to the powers above me," declaimed Hannan's voice loudly, "them, too, is ones."

"They are," murmured Nora, pausing.

"I did but hand them the shoeing bill to-day, and she says, Miss Mellicombe says she, 'I will not account for horses' shoes,' says she; 'and I paying for his keep.' So I up and towld her that shoes was not oats an' hay; an' she said I was an eegit. 'Happy Christmas, miss,' says I to her Christmas Day, and it didn't bring even a shillin'."

It was just about the festive season that Mrs. Butler took occasion to have another talk with Mollie. It concerned her stepson Dennis, and the permanent blight of his future.

"Married to money," said Mrs. Butler, "he can live as man ought to, with horses and motors and a comfortable house and a charming wife. Dennis is going to see Miss Hall Marten in April; he has promised to."

Mollie, with her blue eyes very bright, said she hoped Dennis might be happy. She refused two mounts on the black horse, and gave up hunting for a week after this.

January rushed in on the back of a north-west gale, cloaked with cloud and frozen with icy rain.

Mollie Knox, tired of the house, and tempted by a lull in the storm, said that she would go out and along the muddy roads, Pepper, Sandy's terrier, with her. It was a mere pause in the storm king's rough game with the world. She had walked for a mile and then turned in across the fields to look at the river, when a great gust of wind shook the calm. The boughs bent before the blast, as it whistled across them, and, looking up, Mollie saw a huge mass of inky clouds lumbering up with the wind. She hurried down the shelter of the hedge. If she could cross the river farther she would get back on a sheltered road and struggle home.

Mollie remarked to some disconsolate-looking cows that she had been a fool to come out; for the later gale seemed to have gained strength by the rest, and whooped across the sodden earth, coming in solid blasts, hard to stand up in.

The Milquen roared in heavy flood, with floods of brown water crinkling on the edges of the banks. Cakes of soft foam came eddying into the sides, massing there; the current roared horribly above the howl of the wind.

The bridge was of two planks roughly flung across, with a thin hand-rail nailed at one side; the yellow flood muttered barely a foot below it.

Mollie looked behind her. She knew then she would find it almost impossible to make her way against the gale, and that her only hope lay in getting a farmer friend of Sandy's to get out his cart and drive her home.

Picking up the dog, she got on to the bridge quickly, to be almost knocked off it by a gust.

"What nonsense," said Mollie, sadly realizing that she was frightened. "Quiet, Pepper!"

The yellow water roared so near below, in swift eddy and mighty slide, the wind swooped at her as some great beast of prey.

"Nonsense," said Mollie, clinging and staggering.

Then, for some unknown reason, the hand-rail snapped in front of her. A wind-flung branch had struck and cracked it the night before; it parted now as the planks swayed and shivered.

Mollie turned to go back. She grew giddy; she could not face the force of the gale against her. She went on again, close to where the rail had broken, and the flood yelped higher with a snort.

"It will break behind me now," said Mollie dolefully. She looked, fascinated, into the rushing river. A great shower of icy rain fell, blinding her. Mollie knew that unless she gathered her shaken courage she would fall in and be drowned. She had the terrier under her arm, afraid to let him go. She staggered and grew giddier; the river was a monster reaching up for her.

"Hello; hold on there!" roared a voice. "Hold on. Don't move. I'll get you over!"

The vast superiority of man asserted itself—the bending

of extra weight and steadier feet, with no petticoats to flap and sweep him off his balance. Mollie cried out in relief.

"Give me Pepper," said Dennis Butler. "Hold my coat, and keep your eyes on the planks until we pass the broken bit. Now then!" And it became a high wind and a swollen river after all.

"I was just coming over," said Mollie, as she put her feet on the wet grass beyond the bridge.

Dennis said mildly that he was not at all sure of that. "I was nervous about some cows I've got down here," he said. "The field they're in gets flooded, and I came to see a fly staggering on the bridge. You might have been drowned," said Dennis, his voice deeper, "you and Pepper. What's that—you're going down to Hanlon's for a lift? You're not; you're coming up to Dennis Butler's for some tea—and he'll drive you home."

Dennis camped out in a corner of Corkcane House, a vast old place which he rented for a few pounds. More than half the windows were drearily shuttered.

Dennis pulled Mollie to a little side door, and into a passage where the lull of comparative warmth and quiet was blissful. Some men create an atmosphere of home. The room which Mollie came into was warm and comfortable. If the chairs were rickety and broken, they were covered with deep-coloured stuff; the old prints on the walls were good of their kind; the rugs had once cost money. A huge log fire glowed in a flat grate, and an elderly woman was getting tea.

"That's my nurse," said Dennis.

He explained Mollie's plight, and suggested potato cakes as a remedy.

Mollie was tired, the aftermath of a great fear was still bearing on her. She sat by the fire, and wished that she did not want to cry.

Hot tea and potato-scones brought the prosaic comfort of food.

"With heaps of money," said Dennis, "one could live in this house. There's a garden full of treasures, and some of the rooms are lovely. I got leave to search the attics to furnish this."

Mollie said gruffly that she hoped money might come to it.

"One couldn't try to live here, without it, could one?" asked Dennis. "Eh, Pepper? Even dogs want bones, Pepper."

"And human beings—cigarettes," said Miss Knox, briskly. "Now, if you have a pony cart, and we can get against that wind, I'll start."

It was howling and raving outside. Its very wrath brought a sense of comfort to the warm room. Turmoil and tempest shut out, inside, youth and companionship; potato-scones and tea. Would not any money do—anything suffice? Mollie thought, and said the turfy smoke made her eyes smart.

"If I ever tried to farm it properly," said Dennis, "but it all goes on horses. If the black now won a big race and sold well! Three hundred or so would do a lot for a bit. When I'm in England, I'll have a chance."

Mollie made for the door hurriedly, and demanded the trap. She went to the old kitchen where Dennis's old nurse slaved joyously for him. The old range presented the aspect of a dignified mother with a foal, for a tiny kitchener crouched in front of her black splendour. Mollie thanked the old woman prettily.

"If Mr. Dennis had his rights," said his old nurse, "'tis not tryin' to live he would be here, with a rabbit an' a duck an' a snhipe, but he up above in his home. There is no sinse in him, God bless him," said Bridget lovingly, "an' no chanst for him but a rich wife."

Mollie was driven home through the roaring tempest. She was peculiarly meek for her, and accepted a mount upon Gameboy when it was pressed upon her.

"If you like," said Mollie quietly.

"My dear child, where did you get to?" said Sandy, rushing out.

"Very nearly into the river," said Mollie, "with Pepper, too."

Miss Mellicombe, attired in a steel-grey tea-gown of extreme magnificence, was shocked by the episode. She considered it most unmaidenly.

"Mrs. Butler will be greatly displeased," said Araminta, when Dennis had gone to borrow clothes for dinner. The evening was, of course, far too bad for him to go home again.

Mrs. Butler was exceedingly displeased. She glared at Mollie loftily when next they met.

It was just after Christmas that Araminta put forth a coy request for the invitation of Mr. Eustace to Castleknock. He was coming to Dublin to stay with a friend.

Nora issued the invitation with resignation. March was her only hope of release.

The Rev. Arthur Eustace was duly fetched in the motor. He was a kindly, broad-minded young fellow, anxious to see the best side of humanity. It was not unusual to see him smile or frown as Araminta reared a hedge of quite imaginary prejudices about his religion.

Araminta insisted that family prayers should be the rule during her fiancé's stay, and when Sandy's hunger had proved too much for his politeness, making it impossible for him to wait, and they had been abandoned, Arthur Eustace had finally strolled down absolutely the last arrival.

"Theoretically, Araminta," he said, replying to Miss Mellicombe's outburst, "family prayers are excellent. In practice they merely make ordinary people annoyed and hungry."

Mr. Eustace spent a great deal of time in the school-room; he loved children; also the pipe, which Araminta considered undignified, could be indulged peaceably up there. He made sticky toffee over a turf fire; discussed

books with Miss Brown, and from the first hour seemed exceedingly happy.

"One must work," said Eustace, a little wistfully, "but if I could do as I chose, I should live in the country."

He came on a Friday. Araminta, after several uneasy silences, suddenly announced that she would not take Arthur to the parish church on Sunday. "We shall try the chapel," she said loftily.

Arthur was led forth; he confessed afterwards, without the faintest idea of his destination. He met them all at lunch with a twinkle in his eye. Araminta was stormily ill-humoured.

"I loved it," said Arthur Eustace. "It is always the most beautiful of services."

"And Father Carey, vice Mr. Hidderman?" questioned Sandy.

"It was not Father Carey, it was a stranger," burst out Araminta.

"He was very human," said Arthur Eustace, "he publicly rebuked his congregation because they never gave him anything but eggs and bacon when he came to strange places. He asked us in the name of Heaven, what kind of—er—stomach they all thought he had—and if there were no sheep in Cahervalley to provide chops."

"Disgraceful," said Araminta, relieving her ill-humour by a spirited wrangle with Hildebrand.

The Reverend Arthur Eustace wore a curiously thoughtful expression as he listened to the verbal sparring of the cousins.

Later, mollified by hot cutlets and apple-pie, Araminta began to talk of all the good she meant to do when her share of the inheritance came to her.

"I shall put in a stained window for you, Arthur," said Miss Mellicombe, "and you can have a proper room for the people to read in, and a curate, so that you can come out with me instead of slaving."

Arthur Eustace crumbled his bread, making no answer.

Sunday was never a day of rest for the cook at Castle-knock. The big drawing-room was generally full of visitors, and Hildebrand invariably remarked that hot cakes were sinful as he ate his fourth or fifth.

After tea Araminta looked in vain for her fiancé, who had gone to evening church with Miss Brown.

Sandy met them, both exceedingly wet, upon the doorstep, little Miss Brown with quite a colour from the walk.

Araminta said that it was very forward of the governess to have gone in this fashion. Coming to dinner in a splendour of shimmering beads and opal shades of satin, she smiled more genially.

"To-morrow," she said, "Arthur shall see me riding at a meet—out hunting, Arthur, in a grey habit."

"If you'd like a mount yourself, Eustace," said Sandy, "there's Nora's chestnut four-year-old."

The Reverend Arthur Eustace simply beamed as he accepted.

"I used to hunt every year at home," he said. "No; I never told you, Araminta; you see you might have thought it undignified."

"Very decided wink, Maria," observed Phillips to the parlourmaid: "clerical gentleman very expert at winking, Maria."

Araminta was shocked. She had vaguely expected her Arthur to flutter holy wings about this household, to be perpetually superior. He had watched bridge being played and even offered advice that evening before dinner, and now he was boyishly overjoyed at the prospect of risking his neck upon a raw well-bred four-year-old, a hunter with more zeal than experience.

Araminta spoke in low tones to Hildebrand; she swept her be-beaded gown up and down the room restlessly; then she grew happier.

"You can stay with me *all* day, Arthur dear," she said, over the flame of her bedroom candle—"to see me ride."

"Go well?" queried Eustace softly, to his host.

Sandy shook his head, and Mr. Eustace sighed heavily, then brightened up.

"Dreadfully difficult not to lose people out hunting," he said happily, as he went off to bed.

The meet next day was at Cloonana, a country which Araminta loathed. She watched the unpacking of her clergyman from the motor dubiously. He was not perched upon the pinnacle of loftiness which she desired to fix him on.

Mollie was in the car to-day; the black horse had done a hard Friday.

With a sigh of sheer delight Mr. Eustace got into his saddle, and endured three light-hearted plunges as he did so.

"Lightsome is he, Patsy, and lays hold, does he? Better than stopping, Patsy, eh?"

When hounds found, Cloonana is never blank.

Araminta rode the brown horse firmly up to the chestnut, and pointed out the road as the safest place to stay on.

"Hssh! there he goes," breathed Eustace, "steady, boy! Come, Araminta, they're over!"

When Araminta next saw her future husband, he had lost his hat, one black trouser-leg was rucked above his knee, and he was palpably one of the happiest people in Ireland. His thin face shone with keen enjoyment; the chestnut was now going perfectly, and fencing less flippantly.

"You lost me, Arthur," shrieked Araminta from the lane she was pounding along. "I told you to stay on the road."

"I've never ridden over such a country. I've never seen such a place," returned Eustace. "The horse is a—ripper!"

"Arthur!" said Miss Mellicombe. Then to Mrs. Butler: "There is my fiancé, dear Mrs. Butler. He

mislaid me in the rush. He must have been so anxious. He will come here now."

"They've got it. Jump in if you want to follow me," shouted Eustace clearly. "Come on!"

The next moment the chestnut had topped a high, narrow bank, and arched out over a wide ditch beyond it.

"He seems anxious," said Mrs. Butler dryly.

Sandy had a nasty fall and went home early, after the run; he gave his second horse to Eustace.

When Araminta, who had ridden home by herself, came down, she found every one back except her Arthur.

"They must have had a long hunt; he has gone quite mad," said Araminta severely. "The other horses are in long ago. I heard them pass. Perhaps he is hurt."

Miss Brown looked at her charges, who were quiet for the time being, then she slipped out of the room.

The evening was still and pale, the glow of a moon shining behind thin clouds. Araminta hoped, ill-humouredly, that Sandy's horse had not fallen into a ditch or been idiotic.

She said that Ireland was a most disturbing spot—even to holy angels.

At this point wheels crunched on the gravel, and they ran out.

A luggage cart, driven by a stout and red-faced farmer, who had decidedly not been teetotal during the day, was lumbering to the door. Four people were crowded on the narrow seat; the centre two being Mr. Eustace, with a handkerchief tied round his head, and little Miss Brown. They were both smiling cheerfully.

"The finest run in the world," beamed Eustace. "Ten miles and more—away over the most glorious country."

"Arthur!" said Araminta.

"We found at a place called Clonshire, and ran out west."

"Past Gurteen," cried Sandy.

"And straight for some hills, going like smoke."

"Arthur!" repeated Miss Mellicombe.

"Knockagreeena," cried Nora.

"And swung round under them, running fast still."

"And he caught the Master's horse just then," said Miss Brown.

"And then back over such a valley. Oh, such a valley!"

"The promised land," said Sandy.

Miss Mellicombe groaned at this speech.

"Oh, it might be," said Eustace, "only it flows with big ditches, not honey. And we killed in the open."

"And he got the brush," piped Miss Brown.

"Only five up," said Eustace. "And it was very late, but the Master said I'd never find my way, and just then this man passed, and one of the whips took home your horse. Acland, they said, you'd be quite happy. And Joe Clancy and his brother drove me here, bless him!"

"An' welcome," said Mr. Clancy briefly. "Well, just a glass, Mr. Phillips, thank ye."

This to Phillips, who had arrived with fiery refreshment on a tray.

"And ye're health," said Clancy. "Success to yer reverence."

"Long life to ye," observed his brother. "Sure ye'd bate the devil across any country."

"Arthur," said Miss Mellicombe again, as they all got into the house.

"Oh, Araminta," said Mr. Eustace absently. "Pity you don't care for jumping, isn't it? Dull work on the roads."

Miss Mellicombe sniffed haughtily.

"What I cannot understand," said Nora, "is how Miss Brown got into that cart."

"We met her beyond the gate," said Mr. Eustace, "and took her up. I told her all about the run."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Brown excitedly.

Over a late tea fences were jumped, both runs ridden

again from start to finish. Araminta, gravely displeased, sat bursting with repressed impatience.

All the discussions she had meant to impress the Aclands with were left forlornly unuttered, while the great example she had held up to them rattled on cheerily with :

"Never saw such banks before, and, Jove! the way those horses do 'em! Was very nearly down at a nasty stone-topped affair, but recovered as only a horse with shoulders can. One dog, with a triangular brown patch on his quarters, a marvel to hunt; and another light coloured one. What? Dragon and Sunlight? I'll remember those two."

And all the time, as Araminta sat in glum silence, little Miss Brown would chime in with: "Oh, splendid. Oh, I do wish I had been driving. Oh, Mr. Eustace, how glorious for you."

"One of the best fellows in the world," said Sandy, when Mr. Eustace, tired out, had gone to bed.

"I could not have believed it of him," rasped out Araminta fiercely. "Even a soup-kitchen would not turn his mind from hunting this evening."

Sandy looked at her gravely. "Araminta," he said, "do you think a man serves his Lord the worse because he's full of pluck and enjoys a gallop? The same straightness of going, Araminta, takes him over ugly fences in the slums he works in."

"Gracious! there are nothing but streets," said Araminta coldly, "and the only fences are the gutters."

Miss Brown clasped her thin little hands together and peered into the fire. Then she raised her small head and sighed, as Sandy's son would have remarked, "to shake herself."

"There is no fence," said Miss Brown, looking hard at Araminta, "which could keep Mr. Eustace from his duty."

"We shall have Miss Brown hunting next, on the tubby pony," said Sandy thoughtfully.

The stables were in the 'grip of preparation. Red Fancy, muscular and blooming, was doing hard work, and Delight, his partner in his gallops, striding along snatching at his bit, and jumping with the lithe ease which takes nothing out of a horse in a race. They had trial stuff in the flat in old Delight.

Pop-Gun, the little brown, did his preparation too. He would never go any pace, but his jumping was a study: his powerful quarters seemed to shoot him into the air, his perfect shoulders to let him down without a second's pause in the plodding, resolute stride which he could make no faster.

He would gallop into the first fence level with Red Fancy, and gain a stride across it, to be hopelessly lost when the big bay began to gallop.

Watson developed nerves. He watched his favourite with eyes which would not keep steady, he required constant comfort from pretty Delia.

"If we had the old master here," he would murmur, "and then blow me, but I keeps a-feelin' he is here. There's something chills me, an' I watchin'."

Phillips said sympathetically it was wet feet, advising two pairs of socks, but Watson was not comforted.

"The chill," he said with dignity, "did not come from his stocking soles."

"He said he'd come to see his horse win, did Mr. Hannyside," said Watson. "'E swore it, Mr. Acland, that he must be there to see the blue-and-silver come home in front, an' s'wept me, an' they gallopin' to-day. When Pop-Gun passed I'd swear I 'eard a chuckle."

Delia counselled the advice of Father Carey, asserting that he would put an end to it all. She performed certain mysterious rites with a bottle round the stable yard, but Watson's nerves grew no easier.

"For I tell you, Phillips," he said, "there's something, there is. When Miss Mellicombe and Mr. Hildebrand come out to-day, standin' to watch, and Miss Mellicombe, she

says bitter like, 'Now when the race is over we'll see, Hildebrand. And all these brutes we can get rid of shall go,' I'll take my swear I heard the master laugh. The kind of choking chuckle he had, all mischief."

" 'And I think,' says Mr. Hildebrand, 'that if Miss Knox is going to live on here, there is no occasion for us to support her, Araminta.' With that, I tell you, I shivered."

Phillips replied mildly that the warmth of generosity possessed by the two cousins was enough to make any one shiver.

The strain of tension hung over Castleknock. March came nearer inexorably. One day of suspense, and then they must wait for another March. It made Araminta bitterly irritable, and Hildebrand gloomily irate. Sometimes when they ceased quarrelling they would sit talking together, staring at each other and making plans as to saving money. Araminta's High Church propensities, coupled with her extravagance, never ceased to irritate Hildebrand. Hildebrand's desires for cold mutton on Sunday, and a church service shorn of all adornments, was always food for Araminta's contempt.

"I wish to Heaven it was over," said Sandy drearily; "and I tell you, Nora, there is a joke in that letter I hold. I know it; that's what the old man comes back to chuckle over, you bet."

Nora Acland said that her husband was absurd.

Mikkelo discussed the matter with his cousin Hannan, until they reached the entrées, for any name which had to do with laughter or spirits.

"For that's a warning," said Mikkelo. "Didn't me aunt's cousin be marriage go over the cliff at Lahinch, an' he havin' a drop in one time, an' he goin' on to Galway next day? Well, he searched the papers, an' he found a horse called Lucky Chance, and begonnes he backed him; it bein' a lucky chance he wasn't dead."

"And did he win?" said Hannan excitedly.

"He did not, for me aunt's cousin died," said Mikkelo.

"It was one called Goodbye that came home, for, you see, he mistook the sign."

February slid in softly that year. The country was slushy from rain, the ditches brimmed with dark-hued water; but now came a spell of dryness, of blue sky peeping behind flecks of misty grey, of soft winds blowing up promise of spring.

February is wont to give us great hunts before the chill birth of March grips and kills the season. We find travellers in our coverts who take us far away over little-known lines. Scent lies well as a rule, and the ground is beginning to ride lighter.

With the sun coming out warmly, with the whisper of waking life in the world, Mollie could not resist hunting. Each day, she said, must be her last, yet each day saw another which could not be missed. The chestnut four-year-old, growing discreet as he found that there was something to do out hunting besides bucking, was now entrusted to her. But her happiest days were on the black Gameboy, grown into a horse worth many hundreds.

"I ought not to be here," said Mollie; "I ought to be away somewhere doing something, for I know there is nothing about me in that old letter. Red Fancy will win the National. Araminta will go to London and impress the West End with all the good she does in the East; Hildebrand will live in the odour of sanctity at Northlap; and—that's all." Mollie never spoke of the clause in the will naming her, if the cousins failed to carry on the stud. She regarded the idea as beyond probability.

"He ought to bring in three hundred," said Dennis, leaning over to pat Gameboy's neck. "There is a lot of spending in three hundred, if one didn't pay any debts. Suppose," said Dennis, "I sold him, and put it all on Red Fancy. He's at ten to one."

"Ten o's are o," said Mollie, making imaginary lines, "ten o's are o. And ten 3's are 30; 30 and two o's."

"I think they've found," said Sandy, riding up. "Listen!"

They were drawing a big woodland. Flicker of sunshine fell through the bare brown boughs, chequering the rides to silver. Brown switches and ragged ferns grew beneath the trees. Hounds came across the ride, busy on a stale line.

A long-drawn yell from outside. Scurry and rush to the gate; and then a short burst into Lusky Gorse, across light going and mountainous stone walls. Gameboy was fresh to-day. He reached at his bit as they galloped up the holding rides; he strode away with his neck set against the bit when they got outside. Probably if he had had a man on him he would have pulled very hard indeed; but the very certainty of his strength keeps a blood horse from dragging the slight arms which have no real power to stop him.

Most people who hunt in Cahervalley know the two great walls beyond Creena Wood. Bleak and grey and solid, they rear their crests across the fields, waiting grimly for the first brave spirits who will knock down the stones to let more cautious people get over.

It takes a bold horse and a clever one to arch up on to the top and, changing lightly, drop down again. Then with one thrown behind, a second monster rears itself in front, a slightly lower wall and easier to top.

It was over the first one that Mollie knew what a fourteen-stone blood horse, with ten stone on his back, is capable of doing.

Gameboy was ridden his own line now. He swung out clear to the right of hounds, and Dennis, looking up, was horrified to see the big black extended, thundering down at the huge wall.

"Steady him!" shrieked Dennis. "He must top it. He's not too fond of a big wall either," he added to himself.

Dennis set his teeth for a hideous fall. At that pace, with Mollie, seraphically happy, urging, rather than checking

her horse, it seemed certain that Gameboy would catch the top with his knees and turn over into the field beyond.

Phillips was nervously endeavouring to remember if his master had a respectable hat for the funeral, when Gameboy swept upwards with a soaring bound, high above six feet of grey, and then they saw his heels swing clear of even a stone.

"Be gripes!" as Patsy described it afterwards, "whin he lepped the lep that no horse could lep the sight wint out of me eyes."

Mollie said afterwards that it was just like going to heaven. The black steadied himself in the next field, topping the second wall accurately. Behind them, the air was full of the rattle of falling stones, as gaps were torn in the first big fence.

On then, over low fly fences. Hounds racing with nothing to stop them, into Lusky and round it, and back again to the wood they had started from, when the fox got into a rabbit-hole after half a hour's gallop. A bank country is more abiding pleasure to ride over, but sometimes a scurry over fly fences is something to remember for many seasons. It takes a fast horse to live near hounds as they fleet over the stone walls; horses are on the top of the ground, with no deep fields to blow them. One can see hounds easily, without fear of losing them.

"Dennis," said his stepmother, "is absolutely mad to allow his one valuable horse to be risked over these stones."

She offered Mollie some cake as the girl rode by, and her smile was a study in repression.

She then said kindly that she was glad to see Dennis getting his horse trained for a lady's use, and she asked if Mollie was going to see the National.

"We are all going over," she said, "to stay with the Hall Martens. Miss Hall Marten wants Dennis to ride for her in some race there about that time. You will be

leaving about the end of March, will you not, Miss Knox, leaving Mrs. Acland?"

Mollie said "Yes," dully.

"Leaving Ireland," she said, dropping her cake.

Mollie looked round at silvery skies, at purple distances, seen across the network of stone walls.

"Leaving everything," said Mollie to herself, as she sent Gameboy home. She would not go to the last draw.

CHAPTER XVII

Think, when we talk of horses . . . it is a theme as fluent as the sea.

—*Henry V.*

“ONLY a month,” said Araminta Mellicombe, hysterically. “Only one month, and the torture of this year will be wiped out—“its misery, its discomfort.”

Sandy Acland coughed softly.

“I could swear before Heaven I heard it then,” said Watson, “a chuckle, right up in my ear.”

Pulling double, Red Fancy swept towards them, eating up his work gluttonously, big and yet muscular, just right for the four weeks’ winding up.

No one looked at Pop-Gun, who pounded placidly on behind the crack.

As the head boy pulled up Red Fancy, the bay swerved sharply aside, snorting.

Watson said gloomily that ‘osses ‘ad eyes for queer things, but young Greer had something else to say.

“He wasn’t going too well in the heavy piece, over there,” he said. “Seemed to falter a bit like, sir.”

“I never liked his middle,” said Sandy. “Always looked to me as if he’d die away.”

Watson sprang to the horse’s off fore leg, and ran his hand down it; his face, as he raised it, was about as cheerful as a man who hears the judge sentence him to death.

“Sus—pensory,” he hissed, between his teeth. “Oh, my Lord—isn’t it the suspensory that I’ve been afraid of all along?”

Yet Red Fancy went in sound, and Watson stood again pondering, hoping against his own decision.

Araminta had shrieked at the trainer's expression, and was now supported, unwillingly, by her cousin Hildebrand, who was pale from anxiety.

"The ligament! the tendon! Oh, get up, Araminta!" said Hildebrand, "or sit down."

He plunged his large cousin on to the wet grass, where she sat stiffly, too agitated to speak.

"Do you think the horse has really strained himself?" said Sandy anxiously.

Watson replied that he was near sure of it. "He didn't like the look of the leg."

"And why—he should chuckle for that," said Watson. "Take in Pop-Gun, Harry."

Sandy remarked absently that now he would not buy any salmon flies, and Hildebrand stared at his trustee in wrathful bewilderment, followed by snappish questioning as to what salmon flies had to do with legs.

The walk back to the house was enlivened by furious repinings.

If it were true—to wait another year. To live on allowances with all their good money wasted.

"To keep that stable for another year," almost shrieked young Hannyside. "Oats, hay, straw, oil, leather, boys, trainer! Oh, my heavens! I have looked at Allenbury's accounts. Good money wasted."

"We should be better off if Mollie Knox had it," sobbed Araminta, "and not be in this awful place."

Sandy said mildly that the stud could return to Northlap if there was anything really wrong with Red Fancy. He was not going to keep it any longer.

"For there are limits," said Sandy dryly, "to one's patience."

Mr. Watson walked back in unabated gloom. He would lose a large legacy if he gave up his position as trainer to the Northlap stud; but——

"'Ow long might it last," burst out Watson at the gate of the yard. "A year or two, or three, or ten—an' England at no price for some people. And cousins," said Mr. Watson, forgetting himself in his agitation, "cousins handy." Here he spied Mikkelo in the distance, and he sighed bitterly.

"Good heavens! you won't give up training for us, Watson?" said Sandy. "You can't. Think of the legacy!"

Mr. Watson replied gloomily that he had savings. "If there was sense in females, sir," he flung out bitterly, "but there is not."

"Delia," said Sandy to Nora, "apparently refuses to live in England."

Delia, in fact, had visions of a certain house which was to let, where Watson had spoken of setting up as a trainer.

A hive of bees robbed of their honey might have hummed more quietly that day than Araminta and Hildebrand. They raved and stormed at fate, they abused their late uncle, they were united in bitterness against the world. The vast expenditure upon the racers appalled them. New horses had to be purchased for future events.

Hildebrand took down several old books of law, and believed the will might be upset.

"He could not have been of sound mind," said Hildebrand.

"He wouldn't go about chuckling now if he had been," sobbed Araminta.

They grew a little calmer later. Mr. Watson sent down a message to say that the horse's leg was not filling, and he hoped all might be well.

But still flurry and fear dwelt with the two. Araminta's vast box was unearthed and packed. She locked up her saddle carefully, and offered Mikkelo sixpence if he took the trunk downstairs without again smashing it.

"Sixpence! God save ye!" said Mikkelo cheerlessly,

"and the sides of the box just the fit of the narry passage."

The cousins were going to England ; they were setting forth to try to report the complicated will, which left them both unhappily situated.

Hildebrand said they would divide up with rigid fairness. Araminta grudgingly agreed to be content with the diamond necklace if Hildebrand insisted on keeping the tiara.

They swept out of Castleknock with scant thanks to Nora, and they were quite nebulous as to their return. Araminta, in fact, had saved her sixpence, and left the trunk in her room, travelling lightly with two others.

Hildebrand endowed Phillips with Danny Keefe's misfit, in lieu of a tip.

"Very useful for you as you ride, Phillips," said Hildebrand loftily. "Cost me over five pounds, you see."

Phillips bowed respectfully as he took his gift.

He received it in the morning, and before luncheon Mikkelo came forth in breeches of a brilliant saffron hue.

Phillips was pleasantly gracious when Hildebrand questioned him.

"Exceedingly useful, sir. Mikkelo quite pleased to purchase, sir, and Danny Keefe to take back the coat, sir, to alter for a client. Oh, exceedingly obliged, sir, at the present you have give me."

"He might have waited," said Hildebrand thunderously, looking at Mikkelo's legs.

"Mikkelo, they will take you for an orangeman," said Nora unsteadily.

"They will not, ma'am, afther a week's wear," returned Mikkelo, "especially an' I tarrin' the old sthables presently."

Hildebrand and Araminta went off to London to take legal advice. Sandy wrote a long letter to Mr. Allenbury, which brought that irate gentleman straight to Castleknock, and Watson took his horses to Liverpool. Red Fancy, as a bad sailor, must be over for some time.

"But they haven't a chance. He was as sane as I am," stormed Allenbury.

"They'll try," said Sandy. "They will try."

"If they had only got married," said Allenbury gloomily "Now there'll be a nice law case, and nice scandals, but—he grew brighter—"I might get in that libel action before it's over."

"Just think," said Mollie Knox to Mr. Dennis Butler, "if it goes on for years they will both go mad."

Dennis said they would probably give it up and take what they could get.

"But Araminta is going to marry her parson," said Mollie, "and Hildebrand Miss Grimes, so they can't settle things."

Dennis said "H'm" thoughtfully.

"And there you are," laughed Mollie. "Standish would stand on the doorstep when they were starting and quote the witches' chant for Macbeth. Whenever Araminta snapped him up to say it was coarse and beastly he used to get back to the hubble-bubble part again quite placidly. Then he called out 'My kingdom for a horse!' as Phillips wound up, and then he waltzed me round the steps, and said——"

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Dennis sharply, adding, after a pause, that he hoped Miss Knox did not like Shakespeare.

"No, but I love Standish," said Mollie, a simple remark which created a long silence.

"And I've got a place," added Miss Knox, "at Chester.—I hate Chester; it's all arcades—as a kind of companion to a girl of sixteen. She is too old to have her French ruined."

"There are hounds there," said Dennis.

Mollie's laugh told what her chances of hunting would be.

Spring was alive in the fresh, clear air. White clouds sailed lazily across a soft blue sky. Shadows were cut sharply clear, and there was power in the sun. March

winds had now begun to roar across the world, biting fiercely as they came, waiting evilly at corners to leap upon the poor mortal who, standing in the shelter and the sunlight, had believed the day to be a hot one.

The smell of freshly turned earth came from a field close by, where the plough was hard at work, shearing out great red furrows from the green. The ploughman's monotonous cries rang out to his horses at the end of the furrow. "Hup! Woa! Hup! Aisy there! Woa! Hup!" And then, the turn made, they would come steadily down the long field.

Hounds would be out next day. As Dennis Butler and Mollie walked to watch old Cadogan ploughing, Dennis offered Gameboy for one last day.

"But he's almost sold," said Mollie. "And for so much."

"If it was even four hundred," said Dennis, with the ingratitude of man. "But there!" he sighed deeply. "When I make it three thousand," he said briskly, "then——"

The "then" was followed by a long pause, and a stifled remark from Miss Knox that "then" he could buy gloves. Sixes.

She looked wistfully across the fields stretching to the feet of the hills to Ballymacshane and Athgarvin. The very countryside was wildly beautiful in its disorder. There was the wooden gate which Mikkelo had taken down in the autumn to replace by a new one of iron; the gate still lay upon the ground, with sticks and briars piled across between the gate posts, and the new iron gate waited for painting in the shed. Through a gap in the trees she could see a pile of grey stones where a storm had torn a hole in the old wall.

Sandy had sent for the stonemason, but he was away "berryin'" his mother when the message arrived, and then a frost came, and then he had got another urgent job, and so the wall still lay in ruins.

"It made a way out when hounds ran that way," Nora said easily.

The spirit of careless Ireland hung over the land ; the spirit of careless, undying youth—of a child which will never grow old—restless, merry, fretful, loving, raging, from hour to hour. “ Let it wait—I must play. I must go to other work,” she says, when she sees repair is needed, “ this can wait.” While her recklessness offends us, we must love her ; the green land under its grey skies which calls to its people. To laugh with it, to weep with it, to do red murder for it, but to love it through it all.

There was Irish blood in Mollie ; the tendrils of Ireland had wound their way round her heart. She thought of splendid, trim old England, with its smooth roads, its mended fences, its order and its forethought ; and she wanted to stay where to-day was the world, and to-morrow must dawn before it became of account ; where one hunted in the hopes of selling the horses one rode, and drove and scrambled through life joyously with the post and its bills the principal trouble.

“ I love it all,” said Mollie gently. “ Yes, I’ll like to ride Gameboy just once more, Mr. Butler, to give me something to dream of when I go to walk under the arcades in Chester.”

Mr. Allenbury came out on the steps. He was visibly agitated and excited. He held a letter in his hand.

“ I shall be delighted to stay until you all go over for the race,” he said. “ Delighted ! But, my heavens, if this is not libellous.”

Here he bent his eyes upon a letter in Araminta’s handwriting, and read out some of it.

“ ‘ Journeys—travelling expenses—H’m ! Here we are. Believing that ill-intentioned persons influenced our uncle—influenced, themselves, by a desire to make money which they otherwise would have lost—we are consulting reliable and respectable firms——’

“ Reliable and respectable,” gasped Allenbury, grasping the iron railings. “ Respectable !”

“ Do not pin too much thrust in that same rail,” observed Mikkelo, as he led past a young horse. “ The missus toul-

me to renew it, but I declare the new bit is above on the parcel yet. Have a care, sir," he counselled. "Ye might get a hurt if ye went down."

"Might!" said Allenbury, gazing into the depths of the stone-flagged cavern before the kitchen window. "Might, indeed."

He left the support of the railings, and went on with his letter.

"Where was I?—Respectable," he said. "Yes—'Respectable firm, Messrs. Graspe and Hawke; and also Shodalby and Takeawle'—noted robbers!" sniffed Allenbury. "'They advise us to try our case of upsetting the will and refusing to waste money on a racing-stable. We are consulting Mr. Heith Pritchard, K.C., to-morrow.'

"And he'll tell 'em," said Allenbury, gesticulating—the two idiots——" Here he begged Mollie's pardon, for he had apparently knocked her from the top step into Dennis Butler's arms. "I thought I merely touched your arm with the letter," he said.

"At times," observed Sandy, "one's footing is insecure. Well, we shall hunt to-morrow, and the east winds have not begun. Tell us more, Allenbury."

The meet was at Killeen, some distance away.

March held his chill winds back. A soft west wind blew grey clouds across a background of pearl grey. Dun heaviness lurked on the horizon; the hills were misty indigo, dark against the pearly softness of the sky. The rusty look of changing coats made most of the horses seem rough and poor; they were light, too, after an open winter, but hard and fitter to go than when they had bloomed roundly in November.

Gameboy had kept his condition well. His light burden had never tired him. He stood ready for Mollie to be put up, quite determined to plunge pleasantly when she was settled in the saddle; but far too much of a gentleman to think of moving before she was ready. Without a bit of lumber on his great slashing body, with legs flat and clean,

his deep girth and galloping quarters, and above all his quality, Gameboy looked more than worth the three hundred pounds which was to be paid for him. He pulled a little, and was hot for a few fields, but, once settled down, his manners were perfect.

Hannan, having been ordered to keep Araminta's horse exercised, had led out Nora's mare to the meet, and from the extremely meek expression on Hannan's face, it was quite evident that he did not mean to go straight home. Patsy was mounted on a powerful three-year-old, short in front as yet, and mad for his hunt.

They jogged on to Killeen, a gorse running along the side of a steep hill, hard to get a fox away from, difficult to get away from oneself; the fences were a network of wire. A benevolent government had set down a nest of allotments, just close to it, where, as Derick Knox Harding remarked, a man might think he was fighting the Boers.

As a rule, meets at Killeen were honoured by cold wind and rain; there was scant shelter on the bleak hillside, and most people could remember long waits there, drenched and chilled, while several foxes played hide-and-seek in the gorse, until they got one by one into a great cave, which represented Den to them.

Energetic people having blocked up most of this, foxes began to run from Killeen, and the waits were enlivened by hope.

But to-day a vixen came flurrying into the open; the covert keeper dived into the gorse to roll stones away from the long refuge, and heads were shaken sadly; there were other foxes on foot, but they were sure to get in too.

Giving it up, a move was made to Killeen bog, a straggling patch of gorse, lying low and sheltered. A hill hung over it, its steep sides fenced by narrow crumbling banks; and at one side horses floundered to their girths in deep, peaty swamp, so that it was never an easy covert to see a hunt from.

Hounds were not even in covert when Harris's cap went

up and his shrill view-halloa echoed across to them. A big grey fox was stealing off towards the hill. One must think getting away, for a cage of wire fences lies just across the bog; and it is always wiser to gallop for a narrow road which leads past them.

Flurry and rush then across the yielding brown earth; clods of turf and mud flung up; the dull thunder of hoofs on the soft ground, those who meant to pull up at the first big fence racing the hardest for their start, and hounds streaming away over the tussocky bog. Once across it they hunted slowly up the steep hill, running hard in sprints. At the top of the long ascent the fox turned sharply, and for a time hounds were at fault; then he, was viewed, going quietly across to some deep fields fenced by thick thorn hedges, where he had often found a friendly hole before. So far the run had been slow and twisty. With Killeen now straight in front, no one took it very seriously, or thought of a great gallop; but just as they were going quietly across a squelchy field, with huge hedges barring view on every side, the unexpected happened. The old grey fox must have been caught napping as he made leisurely search for refuge, for suddenly hounds dashed away, stringing out as they raced over the deep pasture land, flying mute on a red-hot scent. It was no easy matter to get on terms with them, or even to see what was happening. Leisurely people took it for one of bursts the which had never lasted for more than half a mile; the few who always ride for a start, even if they believe they may not want it, crashed through thick spots in the forbidding hedge, and earned their reward.

For there was no more checking, hounds pouring on even, big, holding fields, so fast that one pause for wire one wrong turn must lose a man his place. Wide ditches, brimming full, now fenced the yellowly grassed land. One must swing at them to get over, and the tale of splashing waters and muddy coats soon marked the horses that did not like water.

Jerry, the first whip, was proving the advantage of being a feather-weight, as his well-bred chestnut skimmed easily across the boggy fields. Mollie had got away by following Dennis Butler over the first thorny bank, and now, with a scratch on her cheek and her veil a memory, she was well out on the left, blissfully happy, the black gliding over tussock and water-logged pasture as if the soundest of turf thudded under his hoofs. They dwelt for a moment at the corner of a high demesne wall. The plodding crowd behind called out their hopes eagerly.

“He'll swing here—make back for Killeen gorse!”

Six miles away Dromeen Hill poked its blunt little nose against the pearly grey sky. Not back for Killeen, but straight for that, went the old grey fox. The few who rode that burst close up to hounds are never likely to forget it. There was not a second's check. Horses had to gallop hard across a country which grew lighter, but more trappy; stony, narrow banks cut across the now rising ground—dangerous things to fly, difficult to charge on. Dennis Butler's bay chose the quicker way. He raced into them, declining to be steadied, to slip out clear into the next field. Gameboy was ready with kick of lightning-like swiftness. In the next fence a silver gleam showed through a straggling hedge. Jerry's spring to earth, his snip of the wire, and dart back to his saddle was almost hawk-like; but it delayed his followers. Dennis had seen the wire, and pulled out right-handed towards a treacherous-looking bog. It rode better than it might have, and now there were only six really near hounds—six people within sight of the staunch dog pack as they raced on without a falter; down a steep descent, into a narrow road, one stick of timber the only way off. For a minute horses plunged against each other, for no man wanted to lose his place; then they were over, struggling hock-deep in black plough, with a hugh ditch facing a rotten bank in front. Blown from a severe gallop, with heavy weights on their backs, out of deep churning earth into rotten,

crumbling clay, it was a study in the perfection of the perfect hunter to see the horses steady themselves, find footing somehow, and shoot clear over the ditch on to the bank.

Wise people behind held away along the road ; but there was no room for wisdom in the hearts of those who were near hounds.

"It's not a hunt—it's a steeplechase !" gasped Standish Blundell, as he rode beside Dennis ; "and how long can it last—or we last ?"

They bored through a wide boundary fence with stunted fir trees growing on the bank, got over a deep, overgrown ditch, and galloped up to the road, where hounds checked. Six miles or seven had been flung behind without a minute's real pause, and only six of the field were there to pull up with hounds.

Horses stretched out dripping necks ; they stood with heaving flanks, with wide, distressed nostrils. Jerry was casting hounds in the next field. Dromeen Hill was just above them, and as horse after horse landed out over the low fence on the road it really seemed that they were just at the end of it all.

Muddy coats told tales of grief ; dead-tired horses, driven on in the vain attempt to catch hounds, stood trembling and blowing.

Derick Knox Harding, who had been delayed by the wire, galloped to his hounds.

There it was ! They were away again, but running slowly now up the hill.

No man may say with certainty where a fox will go to. With an unstopped gorse two fields away, this old grey customer swung away from it, and down towards Dreen woods, a patch of thick fir trees lying in the hollow. They ran fast again for a time, over a deep and difficult country, with the wood just in front ; a big bank sheltered a river, running swift in flood, and as five brave men went bravely at it, five men went down.

Some one found a place where one could jump in and out ; they struggled on into Dreen, and left it, too, bearing away towards Fanstown, about three miles away.

Horses were blundering a little now ; hitting the clean grey walls, galloping stiffly and without spring. They had run for over fourteen miles as they faced Fanstown hill.

"It will go on for ever," panted Mollie.

Dennis looked at Gameboy ; the black had two cuts, one of which, though not deep, was bleeding. He was going a little sluggishly. His own bay was dead tired.

"I ought to stop," said Mollie. "I ought to. The horse is tired."

But it was hard to stop with hounds running on steadily, and the thought that it must just be over.

Dennis shook his head. They must see the end of it. They would go on.

Just the last bit, when a horse has lost his accuracy and spring, when a check has chilled him and let him grow stiff, and the excitement of pace has ceased to keep him going. An old hunter may be trusted at the end of a severe hunt ; he has kept a little in reserve, he is set and muscular ; but a weary youngster does not know how to save himself.

"They've turned again—they're running back to Dreen. They'll kill him down there at Blayney," cried Dennis. "Come on !"

They galloped down the hill, cutting off a corner. A crumbling, piled-up double wall reared its grey crest before them. It was growing dark. Mollie was tired ; she let her horse go at it carelessly. They blundered on to the top with rattle of falling stones as the black floundered. Dennis cried out as he heard the "ping" of parting wire. Next minute Mollie and the black were down, and as she struggled free, a stream of red blood poured from Gameboy's fore-leg. He was cut to the bone—a great slice of flesh jagged out. Even when it got well he would carry the blemish for life.

Dennis said nothing as he tied it up. The quiet of evening was falling, and the hunt had slipped away from them. They were alone in the desolate country. Far down they could see hounds, mere dots now, and with them, the few who were struggling on with dusk falling, and horses dead tired.

"It is a wonderful hunt," said Dennis. "And he carried you well, didn't he? Poor old Gameboy."

"Oh, it isn't bad, is it?" groaned Mollie.

"He will be out again next season," said Dennis, trying to speak cheerily. The three hundred pounds which he had hoped for was lost to him now.

They led the limping horse along, knocking down gaps for him, getting out on to the road, and creeping along in the dusk to Blayney, where Dennis left him.

The end of the hunt is one of the records of Caher-valley. Over seventeen miles, with a stout fox killed in the dark, as he struggled gamely back to within two miles of Killeen, and only five people left riding to sound and not to sight, as near as a road or gaps would get them.

Mollie was picked up in the motor. She was driven back to talk wildly of her wonderful ride; and then to sigh—to drop into deep dejection.

"There never was such a hunt," Sandy said. "And you had the best of it all through, Mollie."

"But I have cut poor Gameboy's leg off," said Mollie, dolefully. "And he was sold for hundreds and hundreds—and it was to make thousands. Ten threes are thirty."

Mollie went to bed sadly.

The day after the great run was almost summer-like. Light clouds played on a stretch of blue; the sun shone warmly.

Mollie went down towards the gardens, where in the shelter one could forget that it was March.

The post had brought her a letter, which she read and reread and stared at blankly.

Such words as "comfort" and "kindness" seemed to predominate on the closely written pages.

Dermot Butler's voice startled her. He had come down the path to see the girl standing dreaming in the sunshine. A blaze of yellow daffodils waved round her; early scarlet anemones blazed in a sheltered bed.

The sunlight caught the lights in Mollie's curly hair. Dermot sighed sharply.

"If a man——" he began.

"Well?" said Mollie.

Dermot sighed again. "A man," he said; and hit the daffodils unkindly. Then he added dolefully, that it would be very nice to be born without mothers.

There was a note of hysteria in Mollie's voice as she replied unevenly that they'd look so funny in clu—clu—clutches on the grass; and her laugh was just the next thing to tears.

"Do what your mother tells you," she said soberly, but not without contempt.

"If—I only—needn't," said Dermot.

The sunshine made gold of the girl's hair; her clear skin had nothing to fear from the morning light.

Dermot Butler was heir to a great deal of money, and Mollie knew that her power for the moment was beyond that of all mothers. But she only smiled a little drearily.

"You need to," she said, "you would always need to. It's like the buttonholes you must wear."

"Dermot!" said a voice through the trees.

Mollie Knox took the anemone-bed as cleanly as Game-boy might have. She vanished through the garden gate as Dermot's mother marched into view.

"Dermot!" said Mrs. Butler anxiously, "you've not done anything foolish? You've remembered your promise to me about that impossible——"

"I am going to England by to-night's mail," interrupted Dermot sharply. "I wonder, mater, if you will ever be sorry."

He left his mother alone by the daffodils.

Mollie wandered on through the rambling garden. The white double primroses were making pearl edging against the dull red tiles. Wallflowers blazed in fragrant masses. Flowers flourished everywhere at Castleknock. Nora would have no useful rows of cabbage and potato, without gay colours to tone down their solid worth.

"The gran' borthers I could be usin' up for parsley," old Reidy would growl, "tangled with primmeroses and rubbish, an' them extortions settin' themselves everywhere ye'd be axin' thim not to."

Extortions was Reidy's version of nasturtiums.

Mollie took out her letter again. She read it with eyes which would brim over with tears.

She sat down near the greenhouse and looked dully at Dennis Butler as he came up the path.

"Gameboy?" Mollie queried quickly.

"He'll be all right next year. The tendon may not be stiff," comforted Dennis. "Oh, here, I say, don't!"

For Mollie's eyes brimmed over.

"It's—onions," said Mollie hurriedly. "I—was picking them."

Dennis said politely that the taste of picking onions was a curious one, and he looked at the garden plots.

"I've ruined your horse," gulped Mollie, "taken away your money—all you had for the year."

Dennis sat down beside her. "Fifty pounds a quarter," he said firmly, "all owed before it comes. No house-rent and no furniture. Three horses and a decent forage dealer. There's a lot of counting in it all."

Mollie's eyes studied the letter which she held. They lighted on figures denoting three hundred pounds per annum, and following this something about hunting. She laughed bitterly.

"I can earn that in a year," she said, "and get kept besides, in a situation offered to me. 'What situation?' As companion to an elderly person—the kindest person

on earth," gulped Miss Knox. "And it's just that which makes me doubtful. But I could buy Gameboy from you," she said, brightening.

What Dennis remarked was "Damn Gameboy!" and he never even apologised for swearing.

A somewhat ragged gap in the conversation followed this, until Dennis said that he supposed they would all meet at Liverpool.

"Liverpool," said Mollie coldly, "is a large place. And you will be—well—busy at those races," she looked steadfastly at Dennis's brown-skinned face, at his shabby tweed suit, and boots with a shamelessly visible patch at one side.

"Yes," said Mollie, "you will be busy, and now I see your stepmother."

Mrs. Butler had come on into the garden. They saw her, splendid in furs, outlined against a background of cabbages.

Mollie put her small head up to an uncomfortable angle, her cheeks flamed, she walked towards the house and said "Good morning" stiffly.

But having seen the two seated very close together on a long seat, Mrs. Butler lost caution. She was exceedingly anxious to marry Dennis well, as it would mean no future care as to his allowance of legacy.

Dennis's stepmother, therefore, cleared her throat, and made a frontal attack, plunging suddenly into verbal action.

"Did Miss Knox realize what a penniless marriage meant? How wretched it would be to take advantage of a young man's passing affection? She really trusted that Miss Knox would have the good sense to leave Castleknock immediately."

Mollie's head went higher than before; she crumpled the letter in her hand.

"I can manage my son Dermot," said Mrs. Butler.

"Yes," said Mollie dryly, "you have managed him."

"But Dennis has always been a fool," went on his step-mother irritably, for there is nothing more confusing than a silent opponent.

"I think," said Mollie after a pause, "that I am taking a permanent situation, and that you need not worry, Mrs. Butler."

CHAPTER XVIII

Such a mad marriage never was before . . .

—*Taming of the Shrew.*

Now the Play is done.

—*All's Well That Ends Well.*

THE day dragged heavily at Castleknock. Mr. Allenbury was the only really cheerful person in the house. A letter received from London raised him to radiancy.

"They have been in to Johnson's," he said. "Johnson is our London agent—my cousin, in fact—and it appears their K.C. told them bluntly they had not a leg to stand on if they tried to upset the will."

Sandy was astonished, the day before they started for England, to receive a request for an interview from Miss Brown.

The little governess gave meek notice to leave, and she hovered over the verge of some further communication.

"Miss Mellicombe had not written?"

Sandy said "No."

"Not to say that her engagement was broken off?"

"No! Is it?" said Sandy, endeavouring not to add that he was highly pleased.

"She knew some days ago." Miss Brown fidgeted. "Mr. Eustace was afraid of a hasty temper, and he found he could not love Miss Mellicombe."

"He appears to have told you several things," said Sandy.

He looked at Miss Brown. He realized that she had fluffed out her flattened hair, and a long-lost prettiness had come to life in her small face.

Miss Brown looked meek and said nothing. Then she coughed, and went out.

The morning was troubled by telegrams. They poured

in from England until the harried local messenger said he might as well sthay altogether at Castleknock to save the trouble of pastin' out there ivery second minnet.

But first, by the second post—Sandy sent the motor for it—came a letter from Araminta. It set forth the treacherous failing of Arthur Eustace. "All due," wrote Miss Mellicombe, "to the pernicious influence of Ireland. How could holiness and righteousness last, battered and shaken on four-year-olds in pursuit of foxes? Her heart was broken, and the excuse was that Mr. Eustace considered her, Araminta, who had fasted on Fridays since she was fifteen, unfit for a clergyman's wife, and also that it was only honest to say he did not love her.

"This was engineered in Ireland," stormed Araminta. Further she went on to say that all lawyers worked together, and the upsetting of the will seemed too costly to go on with.

"My next interview with the Mellicombe cousins," said Allenbury, "will be a cheerful one. I am looking forward to it."

"Telegram, sir," said Phillips, arriving with the first of the day's batch. "Very important, I imagine, sir—boy greatly excited, sir."

Next minute Sandy called wildly for his wife; the words on the flimsy orange paper were tragic.

"Red Fancy lame—no hope of starting. Shall run Pop-Gun as arranged. Have wired Mr. Hannyside and Miss Mellicombe. Watson."

Sandy Acland groaned aloud.

Another March practically come and gone. Another twelve months before them, with mere hopes of patching Red Fancy's leg, and perhaps seeing him break down again. With some youngster coming out to learn, at the cost of a fall, that the great bushed-up fences at Aintree are not to be brushed through.

"I am sorry, Allenbury; but I must give it up," said Sandy. "At least if it means that those two," here he

paused, "come over here to watch. The horses must go back to Northlap."

Nora murmured "Salmon and bailiffs," in dolorous tones.

"There were so many of them," moaned Mrs. Acland, "and we never tried for the white trout."

"Telegram, sir," said Phillips. "Three telegrams, sir."

"What is to be done now? Our hope is broken down by training in Ireland. Araminta Mellicombe."

"We shall hold you responsible for this failure. Hannyside."

"They are together; both wires are from Vere Street," said Allenbury, opening the third wire, which was addressed to him.

"Come over at once for interview. Hannyside, Mellicombe."

"I won't," said Mr. Allenbury placidly. "Not until after the race. We start this evening, don't we?"

"Yes," said Sandy drearily. "To see Pop-Gun finish last. Goodness! what's that?"

It was Delia, sobbing noisily outside, talking to Phillips.

"Another by-product," said Sandy resignedly.

Delia's high-pitched tones came audibly through the window.

"Tin shillin' I had on him, Mister Phillips. That I gave Watson to put on, an' there's the five pound I was lookin' for gone for ever."

"That's the way of thim horses," observed Mikkelo, from some unseen corner. "Down goes yer money, and with that up goes an inflamaytion. An' ye'd but folly the sign, Delia. God save us! control yerself! Me nose is off."

Apparently at this point Delia flung something at Mikkelo which hit him, for the shrubs crackled vigorously as some one fled through them.

Delia walked, sniffing loudly, up the steps, raining ill-wishes on the unstability of horse flesh.

Mollie Knox, who was pale and peculiarly quiet, brightened up when she heard the news. She said she would give a great deal to hear Araminta and Hildebrand discussing the breakdown of their hopes.

"They looked upon that race as over," said Sandy. "Poor old Reggie tried for all his life, but they were to win the very first time. Perhaps in March ten years hence, they may realize what racing means."

"Telegram, sir. First boy back again, sir," said Phillips.

"Say if Watson is to run the brown Pop-Gun; surely unnecessary expense, as no hope of winning. Hannyside, Mellicombe."

"Is a reply paid?" Sandy asked.

"No, sir," answered Phillips.

"Then tell the boy to go," said Sandy shortly.

Standish Blundell was going with them to the National. He drove over, arriving at the same time as the fifth telegram, and he had, of course, heard the news from Mikkelo.

Said Standish gloomily: "There's Mikkelo now sitting down with a betting list from Holland, and trying if he'd find anything with a name like a ghost."

It was Mollie's turn to get a telegram. She read it, laughed, and tossed it over to Sandy.

"Delighted to announce to you Susannah's engagement to Mr. Butler. We have wired to his mother."

"Why should he let you know?" Sandy asked.

Mollie smiled drearily. And Nora softly called her husband a fool.

Mollie Knox went listlessly out of the room. Sandy shook his head rather sadly.

"I wonder what is really written in that letter, Allenbury," he said slowly.

"Legal jargon," said Mr. Allenbury; "the old fellow

got something done by another firm. Probably something about his horses."

"He never dreamt," burst out Sandy, "of those two allowing the child ten shillings a week."

Allenbury shook his head. "He may have dreamt of five," he said dryly. "Old Hannyside had fully studied his niece and nephew."

The morning-room at Castleknock looks out on a sheltered patch of flower beds. Nora had re-covered her old furniture, and made the shabby room quaintly pretty. Across the sheltered scrap of turf one could see the hills rising beyond the trees. The hills from which Sandy had first driven down to see Castleknock.

Mollie sat at the writing-table. Taking up a pen, she dipped it into the ink several times, but wrote nothing. Then she smoothed out a crumpled letter and read it.

Kindly, affectionately, Leonard Grimes offered her his home, and his name. He said bluntly that he was fifty; he knew that he was asking for a great deal. But also he knew that a little girl whom he had grown to love was homeless, almost penniless, and if comfort and devotion, if money and care could suffice, he asked Mollie to think of it. She should hunt, have a motor; the worship of Greater Bethel was never to be forced on her.

"For I learnt many things in Ireland," wrote Mr. Grimes, "and even a winter there, if you cared for it, would not be impossible."

The words grew blurred by a girl's tears. The man's simple kindness seemed stamped across the pages.

"If he wasn't so kind—so nice," said Mollie, aloud, "I would not mind so much. I should not mind not loving him——" she faltered.

Yellow tulips made a glory of gold outside, red and white giant daisies, and deep blue forget-me-nots round them. A border of wallflowers seemed to shine as captured sunshine; scarlet anemones flared.

The scent of the spring flowers drove in through the

open window ; far off Mollie could see the misty blue hills, the country she loved to ride over.

Comfort—a good home—a kind companion. Cold things, with the call of springtime in the air ; with the growth of blood-red anemones across the green grass ; with soft Irish skies beyond.

But Dennis Butler was going to stay with the Hall Martens, and Miss Hall Marten liked him. Dennis wanted money.

Mollie took up her pen again, determinately ; she tried to write at first without any ink, and through a blur of smarting tears. She dipped her pen at last, and wrote rapidly.

"Mollie," said some one outside. "Oh, Mollie, you're crying. And there are no onions to-day."

Dennis Butler jumped in over the low window-sill. He had entreated Nora to keep his mother quiet in the morning-room. He looked at the words Mollie had written.

"DEAR MR. GRIMES,

"If you really wish it, I will marry you. If you will understand that I care for some one else, and will always care——"

"Who?" said Dennis. "Who?"

"Mr. Grimes," sniffed Mollie drearily, and wilfully misunderstanding. "And if he only wasn't so nice."

Next minute she saw her letter torn across. With her head held against a shabby tweed coat, she was listening to the impossible suggestions of a hot-headed Irishman very much in love.

"Mollie, he's bald. And, Mollie, even fifty pounds a quarter is something. I'll work, Mollie. I never have. I'll work. I'll make the governor lend me money to buy cows and sheep. And there are rabbits, Moll ! They do make lots of things, rissoles and pies ; and trout ; and if you could face it. Oh, better anything than that," flung out Mr. Butler viciously.

As he raved on he did not notice two middle-aged gentlemen—three, if Standish Blundell could be counted—standing outside. A puff of wind caught half the torn letter which Mollie had commenced, and swept it to their feet. It was impossible not to look down and read it.

“DEAR MR. GRIMES,

“If you really wish it I will marry you. If you will understand that I care for some one else.”

Sandy's push to his guests was rude in its velocity. It swept them back behind the trimly cut laurels. It placed Mr. Allenbury sitting in an astounded position on a polyanthus rose-bush.

The only sympathy which he received being a “Don't let it make a noise breaking under you.” Allenbury got up resignedly, and picked out thorns in silence.

“Those two poor children,” said Sandy, going back to the front. “Oh, those two poor children.”

Mollie and Dennis stared at each other with the bleak misery of youth. They suffer, so they think, more than ever mortal has, who prates of a dull future in which time will bring power of endurance; this present ache of misery is with us, blinding young eyes, paining young throats; with frantic mental fists they beat against the pricks, to fall back bruised and bleeding.

“Oh, Mollie,” said Dennis. “It's fifty pounds a quarter.”

“All owed,” said Mollie, with a dim smile, more pitiful than tears.

Dennis got up. Owed twice over now that Gameboy's price would not be there to help.

“But—that old buffer,” said Dennis hoarsely.

Mollie raised a woebegone face. “That dear, kind, *good* old buffer,” she said. “I see now that I cannot. I'll go to Chester, to the arcades, and work,” said Mollie. “I'll not give him a nasty crying wife. Perhaps—some day——”

"Some day," the cruellest word youth knows. They cannot look with patience across the track marked waiting.

"Perhaps some day," said Dennis, "when I make things pay. And I am no use at farming, after all. Oh, I cannot ask you to wait for me."

"Telegram, sir," said Phillips to Sandy, "brought by a special messenger, sir, both boys being here. Special messenger asking for whisky, sir, in addition to extra portorage."

Next minute Phillips's urbanity was dispelled by his master butting hard against him, as with a spring he reached Mr. Allenbury's side.

"Give him champagne, Phillips," shouted Sandy, "champagne! The Pol Roger. Give him old brandy, Phillips."

"Gor lumme!" observed Phillips blankly, nursing his injured arm, and then hurriedly following his master.

Mollie and Dennis, standing forlornly apart, were roused by the thunderous entrance of Sandy Acland and Allenbury, and roused more fully still by a war-dance performed round the morning-room.

"Read it," shouted Sandy. "Oh, read it and frame it."

He thrust the wire into Mollie's hands.

"Absolutely tired of present situation. Married to-day before registrar owing to religious dissensions. Proceeding to Northlap for honeymoon. Save hotel bill. Wish Mollie Knox joy of horses. Araminta and Hildebrand Hannyside."

"Hildebrand told the best man to send that telegram," said Sandy shrewdly. "It's as long as a letter."

"They are — married," said Mollie wildly. "Then I——"

"Then you have the Northlap stud, with sufficient money to keep it up," shouted Allenbury, "until the National is won."

"And, oh, my goodness, I shall want some one to look after it," said Mollie, looking frankly at Dennis Butler.

"Until one of the Northlap horses wins the race," said Allenbury.

Mollie, pinkly joyous, confused by sudden joy, replied callously, that by then her manager would have five shillings a week old age pension.

"And they're married," said Sandy, calming down. "And they can fight all day, and Hildebrand will go to Bethel and Araminta fast on Fridays, and Mollie has enough to marry on."

"Champagne to select from, sir, for extra messenger, sir," said Phillips woodenly, entering with a tray, and getting over to the telegram.

"They are married, Phillips," cried Sandy. "Married! They'll never come here again, Phillips!" His feet fell to a new dance.

Mr. Phillips committed one of the few indiscretions of his life; he dropped the tray and he gripped his master's hand, and his feet moved rapidly.

As the contents of a bottle of Perrier Jouet frothed from the broken neck on to the carpet, Phillips, crimson at his lapse, explained: "Merely to steady myself, sir. Pray excuse me, sir."

"It was *not* to steady yourself, Phillips," said Sandy. "And I don't wonder, Phillips. I must do something myself."

Mrs. Butler had at length escaped from Nora's detaining hands. As she opened the door of the morning-room she was confronted by the astounding spectacle of Sandy Acland and Mr. Allenbury waitzing gracefully round the room whistling the "Merry Widow." Not having paused to consider appearances, Sandy's arm reached up for Allenbury's waist, and Allenbury rested his hand somewhere on Acland's red head. Mollie Knox and Dennis were standing at the table arm-in-arm, and Phillips and Standish were opening champagne.

"Is every one," thundered Mrs. Butler, "mad?"

"With joy," said Standish, seizing her waist and suddenly sweeping her unwilling feet into the mazes of the waltz.

"La-la. De-de," boomed Standish. "La-la. De-de! Let every man betake him to his legs, tickle the senseless rushes with his heels. Which of you now that will deny to dance I'll swear has corns," said Standish, dragging the lady into a chair to demand the reason of the insult.

"Midsummer madness," said Sandy; "they're married, and Mollie's got the stud to mind, and three thousand a year to do it on, besides odd expenses."

Mrs. Butler got up; she was shaken, and still out of breath.

"She is taking Dennis as head man," said Sandy; "he wants employment."

"As head man?" said Mrs. Butler blankly.

"You were so much against the match," said Sandy, "or she might have married him."

Nora Acland came to the door and looked in. When she had succeeded in finding out what had happened, and quite finished laughing, she pointed to the clock.

"Both motors," she said, "are waiting, and unless you want to go round by the Fishguard route, we had better start."

"My hat, Phillips," cried out Sandy, "and Miss Knox's hat, Phillips, and your own hat, Phillips. I cannot go without a man in my present state of excitement."

"Certainly, sir," said Phillips. "Am quite ready, having always understood that I was to go, sir. Perhaps better to allow extra messenger the whisky now, sir, all opened champagne being finished, sir."

Outside Phillips's voice was plainly heard calling out to Delia that "them two blighters were man and wife, and that the horses would remain at Castleknock for ever."

When the somewhat flurried start had taken place, Mrs. Butler found herself proudly alone in her car. Her step-

n had deserted her. Dermot had wired to say that he would not go to the Hall Martens, as he was taking Susannah to Liverpool.

Mrs. Butler looked furiously at Mollie when they got to the station.

"As head man," she muttered, "the minx!"

Mr. Allenbury announced that he was going straight to Northlap.

"I will get every paper signed before Friday," he said. "The abdication completed. I'll leave nothing to chance, and the falling of every horse except Pop-Gun."

The day of the great race was actually fine. Cold, but clear of hail storms and biting wind. Watson forgot Red Fancy's leg when he heard the news. He said that, after all, Nationals didn't matter. And then he started. "For I could swear I 'eard a chuckle," he muttered.

Miss Hall Marten was looking quite bright in the paddock at Liverpool. She greeted Mollie lovingly.

"Marry him now, eh?" said Evelina. "Not a bad boy; amused me. Wish we could have a cigarette."

Pop-Gun, parading with the rest of the horses, attracted little notice. He was forty to one, offered, in the betting.

Now that Red Fancy was gone, the race seemed to lie between Blue Gate, a slashing son of Walmsgates, and White Cherry, the top weight. Blue Gate was favourite.

The going was particularly slimy and treacherous and deep from recent rain, so that weight must tell against the favourite; he carried twelve stone.

The party from Castleknock were positively hilarious. Allenbury had come back laden with signed papers, and resentment. He talked quite seriously of libel.

Hildebrand, it appeared, was spending his time taking down all the pictures the old man had in his study, and Araminta was pasting some coloured concoction on the window of a room which she meant to make an oratory or chapel of; and they were both very cross.

Mollie trod not on paddock, walk, and turf, but on air,

and whenever she met Mrs. Butler she talked pleasantly o her head man.

There was a touch of pain, too, in her pleasure ; for meeting with the elder of Greater Bethel, who had no business to come racing, she told him gently, the truth and told it brokenly.

He took her hands in his. "Little girls were not to fret. If he could not try to make her happy, he would see some one else do it, and see it gladly."

"Youth to youth," said Mr. Grimes. "My dear, I presumed—an old fellow like me—it was because you were alone ; but I presumed."

"But no," said Mollie. "No!" her eyes blurred with tears.

"I almost wish that I was forty," sniffed Mollie t Dennis.

But Dennis remarked firmly that he did not.

They gathered in the county stand for the big race. There was no Red Fancy now to make their hearts beat anxiously ; only little, staid Pop-Gun to carry the blue-and-silver somewhere in the background.

Just as the parade went past, Nora squeaked and pinched Sandy's arm.

"Them !" she cried, absolutely disregarding her education. "Sandy! Them! See—there! Here!"

Sandy looked, to see Hildebrand and Araminta, their expressions chilly, unloverlike ; Araminta gorgeously attired, and Hildebrand plainly out of temper and ill-at-ease.

The bride and bridegroom struggled across to their late host and hostess.

"We would not stand it any longer," snapped Araminta, without preliminary greeting. "It would have gone on for ever. Mollie can mind those nasty oat-eating beasts, and we are at least at Northlap. We have some things in common," said Araminta, looking blackly at her husband.

Hildebrand growled out that he had been dragged to Aintree.

"That," said Sandy cheerfully, "is a husband's business, to be dragged where he does not wish to go." But Mr. Acland's side-glance at his wife was one of complete understanding.

Hildebrand, seeing Susannah, turned purple. His subsequent *sotto voce* remarks seemed to concern popinjays, and dressed-up men dolls, and Irish worthlessness.

Susannah giggled, and remarked "Oh, delightful!" to the world in general.

Araminta's next subject of conversation was vipers. Vipers, with an emphasis. She launched bitterly forth concerning Miss Brown.

"A sly little mass of deceit," stormed Araminta, "undermining my Arthur's love."

"But why poor little Brown?" Sandy asked his wife.

Nora replied dryly that Miss Brown was to be married to Mr. Eustace in a month, and that a girl of six years old would have seen what the governess meant when she came to give notice.

Hildebrand turned to Mollie to tell her that she would be very poor indeed when she took up the stud.

Mollie laughed joyously, as she replied that her new head man would see to things.

"And I can have all expenses besides," she said. "I am going to race a lot in Ireland. Buy youngsters, and try them, and so forth."

Hildebrand and Araminta were one in bitter fear of spirit. They would have to pay.

"They're off!" said Dennis.

"How delightful!" cried Susannah. She had never seen a race. "Where to? Oh, there, on the track. Oh, isn't it delightful?"

Men talk of that National now as the race of disasters. At the very first fence Blue Gate was stuck into and went down. At the second the Rod, Eureka, and Kathleen

Agragh fell. Hackler's Lad, a fancied light-weight, went at Valentine's Brook.

Of twenty-three starters only ten passed the stand at the first round, and almost every horse which had been favoured, except White Cherry, had disappeared. Whipping them all in came Pop-Gun, galloping doggedly, fencing perfectly, and fresh as when he started. He lessened the gap between him and the leaders by a length as he swept over the water, to lose it again as he plodded to the bend.

Of these ten only six came to the canal turn, and two of these were hopelessly beaten. Pop-Gun was no longer last.

White Cherry led, apparently with the race at his mercy. Benvolio, a weedy outsider, was second, labouring behind the big bay, and Merry Girl third, Pop-Gun next, closing up.

The heavy going had told on White Cherry. Benvolio, with nearly three stone in hand, closed and swerved into him at the second last fence. The bump sent the big horse blundering into the fence; both horses went down on their knees. Merry Girl had died away. Pop-Gun, going as easily as when he had started, jumped past the fallen two, Dayey, his rider's, face alight.

Dayly sat still; he knew the little horse was doing his best. Pop-Gun swung into the straight with a lead of twenty lengths, and a hush fell on the packed stands.

Would he be caught? Tired, shaken, the other two horses had been pulled to their feet and set going; they were racing up, catching the plodding little black. White Cherry faltered and changed his stride. Benvolio forged ahead. White Cherry came again gallantly, his stamina telling, up to Pop-Gun's quarters, to his girths, his shoulder. The roar from the stands shook the air, and so far Dayly had never moved.

Then he made his effort. The spurs went home; with hands and heels he called on the black for the little piece of extra speed which he did not possess. But Pop-Gun

was fresh. Lifted with a frenzy of determination, the horse shot out with his whole game heart; the bay head lay at his shoulder still.

The post flashed. Pop-Gun had won the Grand National. The blue-and-silver had come home at last.

And Sandy swears to it still, that just behind them echoed a dry chuckle of contentment.

"Get down to lead her in," Sandy cried to Mollie. "No, Hildebrand, he's not yours to-day. Come, Mollie run!"

"But—he has won," said Mollie blankly, she was swaying, her face white. "He has won. I shall have no stud to keep now."

"Araminta has fainted," said Nora.

"Let her faint," said Sandy, dragging Mollie through the crowd.

Mollie was in time to put her hand on Pop-Gun's bridle, to try to smile at Dayly, though all her castle in the air was in ruins. The race was over—won. She was no longer owner of the stud. The horses would be sold—all except the old favourites, and she thought there might be something—but not those thousands a year, and Dennis.

"The girl's crying," said a racing man, watching Mollie. "Crying over a piece of the most unholy luck. A hearse horse which ought to have been last. Everything decent down. White Cherry wouldn't have seen Blue Gate win."

Mr. Watson had got his legacy. The lodge in Scotland and ten thousand pounds came to Sandy. Already he had whispered to his wife that they must give half to Mollie. "We can invent some deed," he muttered, "can't we?"

"Araminta," said Nora, "was still fainting when I left her. She used to come round to tell Hildebrand that she would never forgive him for blighting her life out of pique and jealousy, and impatience, and she used to go off again.

They have a doctor there who is afraid she'll slap him if he says aloud that she is conscious."

"And Hildebrand?" Sandy asked.

"Gives as good as he gets, and mentions Arthur Eustace in response," chuckled Nora.

"She is fainting still," said Susannah, coming up. "And so crossly. Oh, delightful!"

Mollie sat upon a bench and watched the crowd surge by. Joy had been swept from her too swiftly.

There was some small pension for the old horses—but nothing to marry on.

Mrs. Butler, seeing her alone, came up to sympathize unkindly.

"Dennis," she said, "is so happy at dear Evelina's. He sang for us last night. You won't want him now, Miss Knox."

Mollie was too broken to answer.

"But—that was last night," said Miss Hall Marten, quietly; she stooped over sad little Mollie.

"I'm going to be married to a barrister and live in London," she whispered. "Only place one keeps awake in."

But Evelina Hall Marten looked just a little wistfully at Dennis Butler, and she omitted to mention that the barrister was as yet unaware of his good fortune.

To win a National and feel doleful over it is positively unnatural, yet the party going back to the hotel would have been happier if Pop-Gun had remained where he ought to have been, about tenth or twelfth.

"And I'd just swear I heard a chuckle," said Watson, when he bade them good-bye, "right in my ear, an' we leadin' the 'oss in."

He had wired the good news to Delia. Watson was now an affluent man, free to mind the old favourites until they died, or to start a training-stable of his own.

They went back to Ireland next morning. The letter which had to be opened, was in safe keeping at Sandy's

bank. To Nora's horror, the bride and bridegroom came with them. They would stop at Cahervalley, but they would not have any documents opened in their absence. Who knew what it might be?

No sulkier newly married pair ever drove forth to Castleknock from Cara station.

"Easy knowin' their coortin' days is done," the driver confided to Mikkelo, who was greatly depressed, and replied that there was some would even coort bither.

The seals were broken, the papers taken out. Mollie, pale and depressed, sat listlessly in the window.

Then came a sudden, unlaywer-like shout.

"He didn't chuckle for nothing," said Allenbury suddenly, completely forgetting his business position. "No, by Gad! not for nothing. It's a codicil. It's—— Oh, listen!" he burst out. "Listen, Miss Knox, it's all for you. Oh, prop up Mrs. Hannyside; she's going to faint again."

With legal jargon set aside, it was concise. It made provision for Miss Knox; it doubled that provision if the cousins had not allowed her a hundred a year. And then, it went on, If Reginald Hannyside's wishes were set aside by his nephew and niece, if they married before the first National following his decease, and gave up the stud, they were to have a sum of forty thousand pounds to live on, an ample sum for an economical pair. Northlap was to be sold, his jewels and the residue of the estate to pass to Mary Knox. Other legacies stood as in his former will.

"That's all. Miss Knox is to be congratulated," said Allenbury quietly. "The residue means a very large sum. Don't faint again, Mrs. Hannyside."

For a moment there was silence, even Araminta made no sound, then a girl with shining eyes sprang to her feet wildly.

"Send for Dennis," she said. "Call Phillips—send for Dennis!"

"Mr. Butler, miss, is here," said Phillips, as he answered

with curious celerity. Any person standing outside by the laurels could hear all that went on in the morning-room at Castleknock.

The others found their voices.

"And if we had waited," Araminta wailed, "waited for three days." She rushed round the room, screaming, slapped her husband hysterically, and rushed again.

"If they 'ad, I believe as 'ow the old master would have pulled the horse himself," confided Watson softly to Phillips.

They were both looking for something in the laurel bushes, and overheard everything.

"And instead, we—we—are—are——" moaned Araminta, rushing on.

"Married!" shrieked Hildebrand and Araminta together.

For quite five minutes they raved at Allenbury and Mollie as plotters and schemers. Then they flung out of the room, demanding the hired car from Cara.

Dennis Butler and Mollie had slipped together to the sheltered spring garden. With scent of wallflowers and hyacinths in their nostrils, they looked across the country to the misty hills. To the west in a nest of trees lay Dennis's house. These two young people would rob the world of an unfair share of happiness.

The scuffling exit of Watson from the laurels did not disturb them in the least. They stood hand in hand, bewildered by this second stroke of good fortune.

"And my stepmother," said Dennis. "Oh, Mollie, how she will regret not having allowed Dermot to make love to you."

"He might have made it," said Miss Knox equably

As they stood silent, Mikkelo's voice, raised in sorrow, came clearly from the field, where he was working at the gate.

"I'd put no reliance in them signs, I till ye, Mr. Watson, niver agin. Didn't Hannan an' meself tiren out our eyes

searchin' for a name to do with sperrits, and didn't we put five shillin' on Brandy Ball, a schemer that niver even stharterd, an' a foreign sthamp as well, that Hannan paid for, God be praised. An' there's signs for ye. Into yer socket now, an' don't be troublin' me!"—this to the gate "Oh, be the hevins above us, sir, but mightn't them two have been soaked in vinegar?" He referred to Mr. and Mrs. Hannyside, who were leaving. "What is troublin' them now?"

Mikkelo heard the good news. He let the gate fall and smiled with complete content.

"Be dam to me half-crown," said Mikkelo joyously. "Won't I often get it an' the double from Miss Mollie."

As they clambered upon the car, Hildebrand and Araminta informed Mr. Allenbury that they would employ their own lawyer. They were done with people who schemed and plotted.

"I will send in my account to your man," said Allenbury gravely.

"A little dissatisfied with life, sir," said Phillips, as he watched the departure. The car had one spring half worn down, so that Araminta clung on near the road, and Hildebrand was elevated high in the air. "A little dissatisfied with life, sir," said Phillips.

Nora came out with an open fly book in her hand. She slipped the other hand through Sandy's arm.

"Oh, it seems so funny to see them married," she said.

"It — serves — them — both — right," said Sandy, emphatically.

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